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SUCCESSFUL CHANGE COMMUNICATION IN LARGE ORGANIZATIONS

A Qualitative Case Study on a Planned Change in a
Swedish County Council

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores a planned change project and its current change communication used to mediate change within one of Sweden's largest county councils. A study on change communication is a relevant contribution to the field of organizational change communication as well as to large-scale organizations. By exploring employees' perceptions and shared meanings about the ongoing planned change, the study aims to discover what aspects of communication that enables or constraints the change process within the organization. The empirical data is collected through three focus group interviews, examined through the theoretical framework of the theory Diffusion of Innovation (DOI), and analyzed through a qualitative thematic analysis. The analysis resulted in four main themes: Change communication, A complex, large-scale change, Stakeholder Diversity, and Opinion Leaders as Change Agents. The themes provide insights on what type of challenges the county council is facing concerning communication during planned change projects, as well as organizational members' roles that are shaped and developed in this process. The study concludes that strategic change communication is essential for planned organizational changes to be successful and suggests practical implications and future research.

Keywords

Organizational planned change; Change communication; Case study; Swedish county council; Adopt to change; Diffusion of innovations theory (DOI); Thematic analysis

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1. Introduction

Why do organizations need to change? Continuous change is of central concern for any organization to keep up with the ever-changing external environment in today's modern and digitalized world. An organization has to embrace internal and external factors by changing its current structures or processes of working in order to ensure efficiency over time (Miller, 2014). Driving forces such as acquisitions, global competition and technology are intensifying and require not only new work processes but also innovative organizational designs and creation of new knowledge (Henderson, 2002). However, change processes in organizations are challenging and complex. Failing change implementation is a common reality for many organizations, which indicates the need for more knowledge about how to implement successful planned changes (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). The complexity points out the importance to study how planned change processes can improve not only through controllable so-called *hard factors* – commonly used by change management in practice, e.g. financial data, costs and project cycles. However, to shift the focus to the less manageable *soft factors* which involves strategies, organizational culture and attitudes triggered by change (Lies, 2012). Change communication central to change management and incorporates these soft factors. Change communication is considered as essential in planned change processes, as it is a form of strategic internal stakeholder management, and can help generate change and does have a central role in its diffusion – including a key role in social constructions and discourses within an organization (K. L. Lewis, 2014; Lies, 2012).

In this qualitative case study, the role of change communication is investigated in a large-scale public organization, a Swedish county council, by studying an ongoing digitalization change project called SARA¹. The change project demands new processes and structures of work and the county council employees are asked to adapt accordingly. The author's purpose with this study is hence to explore the soft factors during this specific change process, i.e. employees' attitudes and perceptions on how the change is communicated. Drawing upon Diffusion of Innovation theory (DOI), the author contextualizes SARA, its surrounding change communication and examines how the role of certain employees (called *opinion leaders* and *change agents*) can have a critical impact on the change process (Rogers, 2003). Three focus group interviews are conducted with county council employees assigned with particular roles in the SARA project (subproject managers and pilot study participants) to identify their perceptions on enabling and constraining aspects in the organization's change communication. The empirically collected data is then analyzed through a qualitative thematic analysis.

This study aims to answer the following two research questions, in which the second is complex and therefore requires a sub-question.

- **RQ1.** How is the ongoing planned change project SARA perceived by SARA subproject managers and pilot study participants in the county council?
- **RQ2.** What change communication aspects do SARA subproject managers and pilot study participants perceive as the most significant for a successful planned change?

¹ The acronym SARA was created by the author as an anonymized version of the project's real name.

- **RQ2a.** What change communication aspects are perceived as enabling or constraining the ongoing change process?

The concept of what a *successful planned change* entails follows the definition explained by Rogers (2003): a planned change is considered as successful when the majority of the organization's members have adopted the change, thus the change does not require any additional support in its own diffusion process. In this case study, the planned change is considered successful when SARA is widely adopted by the employees in the county council and when the overall change process does not need extra support from the organizational change management to diffuse – SARA becomes self-sustaining.

The premise of this study is to locate strategic change communication aspects to assist the county council and other large-scale organizations with successful change project outcomes. The practical relevance of this study is thus for large-scale organizations to receive a greater understanding on how change communication affects their members' perceptions, attitudes and opinions towards change processes. Furthermore, this study contributes to the academic field of organizational planned change and change communication from an employee perception, revealing enabling and constraining aspects on change communication. Additionally, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the dual role of opinion leaders as change agents during change processes.

This thesis begins with a contextualization of SARA and the project related change communication (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 presents related literature and the state of research, including defining central concepts such as *planned change*, *change communication*, *change management* and *internal stakeholders*. In order to theoretically explore SARA as a change project, the theoretical framework of Diffusion of Innovations and related studies are uncovered and applied in Chapter 4. The following chapter (5) presents this study's method (focus group interviews), research design (case study), operationalization, pre-test, data collection, data analysis (qualitative thematic analysis), ethical considerations and this study's limitations. In Chapter 6, the author presents the findings identified through the thematic analysis. The findings are further explored in relation to the research questions, previous research and theory in a detailed discussion. Lastly, Chapter 7 presents the conclusions and provides suggestions on practical implications and future research.

2. Background

To understand the context in which the planned change is taking place, this chapter gives an overview of the case (subchapter 2.1). An overview on currently used channels and key messages related to SARA are found in Appendix A.

2.1 Case description

This study explores the case of a Swedish county council undergoing a planned organizational change. The county council is one of Sweden's largest, with approximately fifty-five thousand employees. The county council consists of a variety of civil services, ranging from health care (being the largest sector) to agricultural public administration. The planned change concerns an implementation throughout approximately twenty-five of the county council's public administration units (PAUs) and will in time affect the majority of the organization's members. More specifically, the planned change is an implementation of a new information technology (IT) and communication system that help digitalize the life cycle of documents in public administration (SARA). Older IT-systems will be replaced, and the majority of employees will be directly or indirectly affected. When implemented, the planned change requires the employees to adapt to new working procedures, routines and structures. It also requires that employees to learn about Swedish laws and regulations regarding digitalization of public document management, new concepts and the technicalities of the IT-system.

A small group of employees with a broad variety of expertise work as the *main project group* with the priority to deliver SARA to the PAUs. They are responsible for providing the PAUs with overall implementation- and change communication support, technical support and educational materials. The main project group have also conducted a pilot study to test and evaluate the IT-system with a focus on user experience. Each PAU has in turn assigned its own *subproject group and subproject manager* to be responsible for their implementation. The reason for this is because the county council is a large-scale organization, and each PAU have its own responsibility for a successful change due to its unique size, structures and challenges. These factors will decide how the implementation phase is developed, executed and becomes a continuous work in progress. SARA is a timebound project and is actively running between August 2018 and December 2019. This study was conducted in January – June 2019, and the data was collected right before the implementation of SARA began.

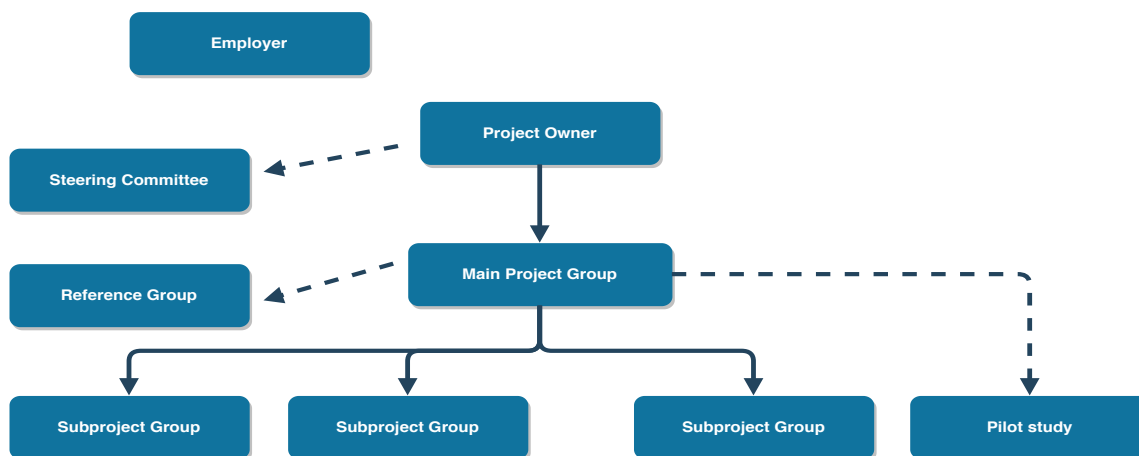


Figure 1. Structure of the SARA change project

Source: Own illustration based on the project directive. Created in Draw.io Diagrams

3. State of Research

This chapter presents the background on previous research and current state-of-art literature, gives an overview on the research problem and explains main concepts. The chapter begins with an explanation on the characteristics of *organizational planned change* (subchapter 3.1). The second subchapter (3.2) explains the central aspect of *change communication*, which is the aspect in planned organizational change that this study concentrates on. Subchapter 3.3 defines *change management* in organizations as well as *internal stakeholders*.

3.1 Planned change in organizations

The topic of change and innovation in organizations is a popular research area within many academic disciplines and includes various perspectives on social processes and communication, management practices, techniques and psychology. Key terminology in change literature is broad, from planned and unplanned change, to concepts such as innovation, adoption, creativity and implementation (K. L. Lewis, 2014). One main reason for the broad interest is because change is a constant feature of organizational life. It is necessary for an organization to be flexible and to adopt to environmental contexts in order to survive (Miller, 2014). A typical planned organizational change involves large-scale implementation to reform existing organizational functions. To present a future vision to the members becomes central, and once the change is planned and implemented it requires the members to adopt (Kim, 2015). According to Rogers (2003), a planned change is considered successful first when the critical mass of the members of a social system (e.g. an organization) have adopted the change and when the change no longer requires support (the change becomes self-sustaining in its diffusion). The county council is an ever-changing organization and has to adopt to changes in regulations grounded in Swedish law, and these in turn represent the Swedish society at large. The county council is consequently a reflection of the external environmental context.

Empirical studies on planned organizational change and change communication in relation to digitalization and new technologies are commonly conducted as case studies. There exist previous studies on similar public, large-scale organizations as this particular case study. For example, Gascó (2003), studies how the transformation to a digital society cause organizational technological changes and implications in public administration, and how this in turn contributes to an overall institutional transformation. In Giritli Nygren (2012) empirical study, gender perspectives in public administrations in relation to organizational changes in IT are explored. The study demonstrates managers biases regarding female employees and their technological understanding and discuss how this affects their communication. A study conducted by A. Barrett (2018), focuses upon employee perceptions in a healthcare organization undergoing technological change. Organizational communication sources (managers, co-workers and IT staff) have an impact on healthcare employees' perceptions on change. The different sources were studied in relation to how their communication either reduced uncertainty or fostered resistance among employees. Covin and Kilmann (1990) focused their empirical study on employees' perceptions on positive and negative influences on large-scale organizational change. Their study resulted in six positive and eight negative categories, all relating to change communication and management. Positive-impact issues were linked to visible management support and commitment, early preparation, encouraging employee participation, a high degree of communication, the recognition of a strong business-related need for change and a reward system that supports the necessary changes. The negative-impact issues were connected to lack of management support, top management forcing change,

inconsistent actions by key managers, unrealistic expectations, a lack of meaningful participation, poor communication, lack of a clear change purpose and lack of placement or a misplacement of responsibility (Covin & Kilmann, 1990).

This study is similar to the above case studies as it is conducted in a large-scale, public organization, with a focus on a planned technological change and change communication during such an implementation. The studies assisted the author to navigate through the complexity of change in public large-scale organizations. However, this case study provides an even more in-depth analysis on employees' perceptions on change communication during a planned digitalization change. From this perspective, the results from Covin and Kilmann (1990) study gave valuable insights on the importance to include and centralize employees and their perceptions on change processes as a way to understand what a successful change requires.

3.2 Change communication

Lies (2012) define change communication as “the single part of change management, which focuses on the soft factors that are activated through the change of hard factors.” (p. 255). From this perspective, change communication can be understood as “an event driven form of internal (strategic) stakeholder management” (Lies, 2012, p. 256) in an organization: change communication is a key aspect of the soft factors within the otherwise hard factor driven change management. Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) acknowledge change communication as one key driver in organizational change. It is crucial that change related communication focus on building employees' understanding of the organization's need of change. Poor communication is considered as a guaranteed failure in realizing changes. For the change communication to become a driver, it should send out a clear message about why the change is needed, its vision and explain overall strategies. In this way, the communication can facilitate employees' understanding and commitment (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Similarly, D. J. Barrett (2002) investigates what kind of employee communication that is essential during implementation of a planned change, and also states that successful change is considered impossible without effective employee communication. According to D. J. Barrett (2002), employee communication should send clear and consistent messages, constructed to accomplish two objectives: (a) inform and educate employees on all levels on the organization's strategy, and (b) motivate and persuade employees to support the change strategy and goals. According to Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, and Irmer (2007), change communication does also function as an essential tool in reducing uncertainty among employees. Their study shows that many organizations fail in forming effective communication strategies that help reducing uncertainty. Management focus too much on one-way communication, primarily on strategic aspects, instead of providing employees with two-way communication and specific job-relevant information (Allen et al., 2007).

Düren (2016) analyzes the empathic change communication style for leaders to apply in large-scale change projects. Communication should be used as a medium for the change message and create attention to it. Communication should be kept simple and does not have to take advantage of every new technological channel. The most significant factor is to provide the employees with early information and to keep this information flow throughout the process. It is also important to create a dialogue with one's employees as a change manager – especially important in complex large-scale change is the interpersonal, face-to-face dialogue (Düren, 2016). Additionally, in Cornelissen, Holt, and Zundel (2011) study, framing is considered as an essential tool for leaders and change managers to foster understanding and legitimize strategic

change. Especially metaphorical framing can become an important link between change management and stakeholder acceptance and comprehension.

In summary, if the county council wants SARA to become a successful planned change, it is of central aspect to carefully consider what kind of messages that are communicated and through which channels SARA is communicated. A well thought-through internal, strategic stakeholder approach will help to reduce uncertainty and resistance, and develop engagement and motivation among employees.

3.3 Change management and internal stakeholders

Organizational change encompasses complex processes of communication between internal stakeholders and management (Miller, 2014), however, initiated change processes in organizations are commonly decided by top management and authorities (Rogers, 2003). The top-down perspective on initiating change is in line with how the county council as an organization commonly works – the authority decides upon when, and what kind of innovation that is necessary for the county council to implement to meet requirements of the Swedish government and society. Duignan (2016) explains change management as an approach by the organizational management that is systematically controlling the change that influences the organization and the employees while following a pre-determined, well-defined set of objectives (Duignan, 2016). However, organizations should not determine the success of a change only in terms of the implementers' desires and objectives. Change is a long, continuing process and it is therefore crucial to evaluate the process along the way, instead of perceiving change as an input-output activity. A wide range of stakeholders should be considered by change management during organizational change, and the focus should not only be upon employees but on any organizational stakeholder. Stakeholders interact with each other and this will influence the direction of the change process (L. K. Lewis, 2011). As internal stakeholders have various job titles and hierarchical statuses within the organization and have different experiences and awareness of change projects, it is necessary to take the diversity into consideration when planning the stakeholder communication approach, the implementation strategies and objectives (Gallivan, 2001). The change management therefore have to develop a variance in their tactics on how to communicate with stakeholders (L. K. Lewis, 2007). Chrusciel (2006) states that the change per se not necessarily is an issue for stakeholders, but rather how organizations manage the change process and deal with uncertainty. Hence, achieving a successful organizational change depends on the realization of both employees and management (Lies, 2012).

4. Theoretical Framework

First, this chapter gives an explanation to why the DOI theory was chosen and in which ways the DOI theory is appropriate for this particular study. Second, this chapter gives an overview of the theory and related studies. Subchapter 4.1 introduces the theory and an overview on qualitative DOI research and some criticism towards the theory. Subchapter 4.2, present four key elements of DOI, and in subchapter 4.3 the model of the innovation-decision process is explained. Lastly, two central roles in change processes, opinion leaders and change agents, are examined (subchapter 4.4).

This study is based on a single case of a large-scale public organization and the implementation of a technological innovation, thus the research requires a theoretical framework that can a) grasp a holistic perspective on communication during organizational planned change (see subchapter 4.2), and b) allow the author to dig deeper into how communication affects the employee journey to adapt to SARA (see subchapter 4.3). Additionally, the DOI contributed to the exploration of enablers and constraints in the county council's change communication by studying channels and messages, roles during change (see subchapter 4.4), and the innovation-decision process (see Figure 2).

4.1 Diffusion of innovation in social systems

The DOI theory is a widely known communication theory, recognized for its broad use in academia with focus on the spread of products, services and ideas (Cheng, Kao, & Lin, 2004). The theory model have been applied by numerous of academic disciplines over the years and is now relevant to many fields including communication, marketing and public health (Rogers, 2004). Other mainstream scholars (e.g. Bass, 1969; Moore, 1995), have developed their own research and models with the DOI school of thought. As Everett M. Rogers is among the most published DOI theorists who have studied DOI since the 1960s' (Rogers, 1962), and is considered to be one of the founding scholars of the DOI theory (Meade & Islam, 2006), this study is primarily based on Rogers (2003), theoretical definitions and concepts.

“Diffusion is the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.” (Rogers, 2003, p. 5). A diffusion can include both a planned and an unplanned spread of an innovation or idea. The adoption of a new idea is complex, and it can take years for innovations to become widely adopted by the majority (Rogers, 2003). According to Rogers (2003), diffusion consist of a particular type of communication that delivers messages concerned with the innovation. Dearing (2006) adds that diffusion processes result in a social change of the social system, and that the process consist of unsettling conditions such as uncertainty, lack of information, structure and destruction, but also learning. A diverse range of empirical studies apply the DOI theory when studying the diffusion of technical innovations, commonly focusing on large-scale organizations, institutions, countries or cultures. Qualitative and mixed-method research includes studies on for example public service innovations in higher education institutions (Dudau, Kominis, & Szocs, 2018), government reforming and the adoption of accounting innovations in the UK (Ezzamel, Hyndman, Johnsen, & Lapsley, 2014), and organizational DOI in relation to power and the diffusion of management ideas (O'mahoney & Sturdy, 2016). Public health and technology studies are commonly researched through the lens of DOI, such as the diffusion of e-Health in post-conflict countries (Woodward et al., 2014).

Even though the DOI theory has been widely applied since it was first introduced, it has also been criticized. Earlier critique came from political science scholars (see Downs & Mohr, 1976, 1979) whom commented on the theory's instability in empirical findings, especially concerning complex organizations. As a whole, the authors suggested for the theory to develop a stronger framework and define what the difference is between the innovation-decision process compared to the level of adoption (Downs & Mohr, 1979). A later critique was developed by Lundblad (2003), whom points out issues concerning how well the theory applies to organizations. From an organizational perspective, only two communication variables are mentioned by Rogers (2003): mass media and interpersonal channels, however Lundblad argues that the theory oversees other units "one would expect for people within organizations (...) such as professional associations, trade or professional journals, and regulatory requirements." (Lundblad, 2003, p. 57). According to Lundblad (2003), the issues derives from that there is a lack of referring to whether it is the characteristics of an innovation that is affecting the process of adoption, or if it is the organizational type, industry or size that have an effect on the level of adoption. Lundblad (2003) also critiques the theory's definition of organizations as social systems with boundaries, as organizations consist of many subgroupings and exist in relation to multiple external and internal stakeholders.

4.2 Key elements

The DOI theory consists of four key elements:

1) *The innovation*. The innovation stands for the idea, object or practice that is considered to be new to the individual or the organization (Rogers, 2003). In this study, the innovation can be translated to the software program in SARA. According to Rogers (2003), a technical innovation can consist of a duality: it can be both a hardware and a software, however, the software is considered more difficult to adopt to because of its low level of observability.

2) *Communication channels*. This point is the central element in the diffusion process. Essentially, the core of the diffusion process is an information exchange, where one member communicates the new idea to another member (Rogers, 2003). This element is of special interest to this study, since it conceptualizes the very core of how communication can contribute to (or constrain) the adoption of SARA. Dearing (2006) calls the change process for a 'diffusion of communication' and consider communication as the central part of the theory and its crucial function through the whole change process.

A communication channel is the means used to transfer a message from one unit to another through mass media or interpersonal communication. In the diffusion process, the individual first make a subjective evaluation based on the information they receive from colleagues who have adapted – the diffusion is hence a process of modeling and imitation of one's colleagues and networks. This aspect underlines the importance of interpersonal communication in DOI (Rogers, 2003).

3) *Time*. The diffusion and adoption of an innovation takes time and relies on: (a) the innovation-decision process the member goes through (see subchapter 4.3), (b) if the individual is early or late in adoption compared to other members, and (c) the innovation's level of adoption throughout the organization as a whole during a given time period (Rogers, 2003). Time is thus a relevant aspect to consider in relation to SARA. Questions arise on how time can be shortened through well-developed change communication.

4) *A social system* is set up by interrelated units that are engaged in solving the same issue with a common goal. Members of such units are individuals in informal groups and organizations (e.g. the county council). Since the diffusion take place within a social system built on social structures, these structures will affect the norms of the diffusion, the roles of change agents and opinion leaders (see subchapter 4.4) and the types of innovation-decisions that are made. Informal structures involve interpersonal networks and interactions between employees. The communication structure of a social system can either facilitate or constrain the diffusion process (Rogers, 2003).

4.3 The Innovation-decision process

The innovation-decision process (see Figure 2) is a personal activity over time that the individual (e.g. the employee) goes through to reduce overall uncertainty regarding an innovation. The innovation-decision process consists of five main stages (Rogers, 2003), as described in Table 1.

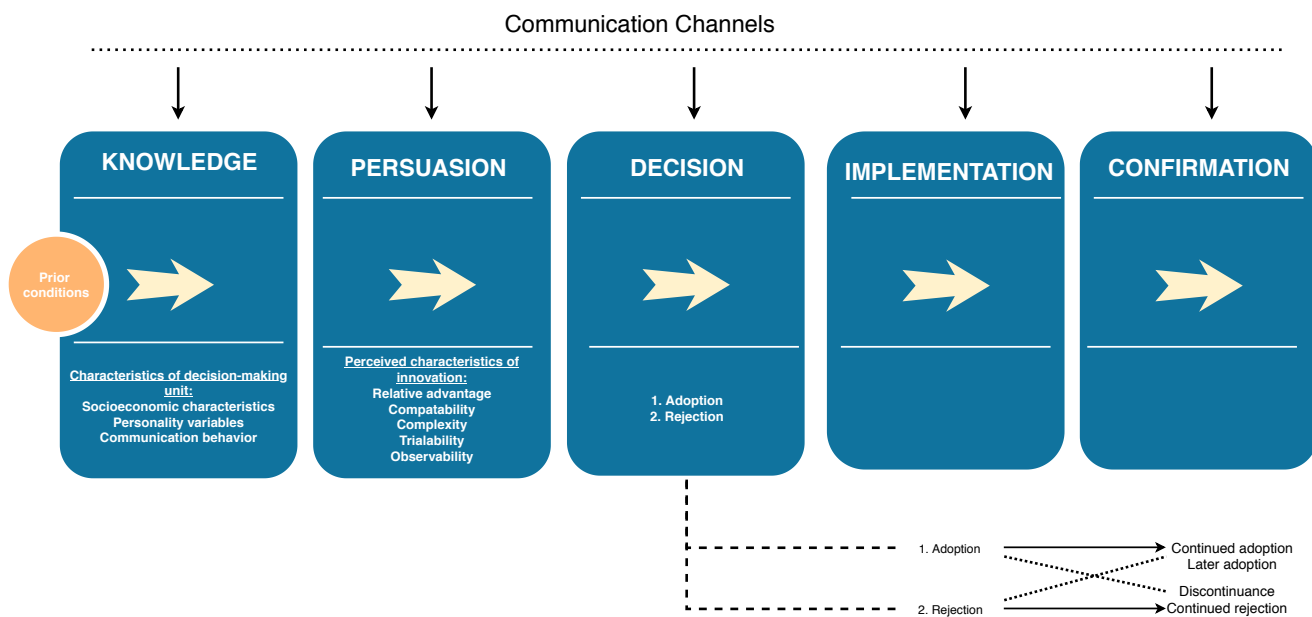


Figure 2. The Innovation-Decision Process

Source: Own illustration, based on *A model of Five Stages in the Innovation-Decision Process* (Rogers, 2003), created in Draw.io.

I. <i>The knowledge stage</i>	In this stage, the member receives an initial understanding of the innovation. There are three types of knowledge to understand the basis: (a) <i>Awareness-knowledge</i> , (b) <i>How-to-knowledge</i> , and (c) <i>Principles-knowledge</i> (Rogers, 2003). In the case of SARA, employees in the county council have to receive initial information about SARA and its existence, how to use SARA in a correct way as well as the innovation's functional principles.
II. <i>The persuasion stage</i>	In this stage, the member forms an attitude towards the innovation. The stage is emotionally oriented and less knowledge-centered, and the individual is affected by social norms, values and attitudes of others (e.g. one's colleagues) and by the level of uncertainty that the innovation implies. How the characteristics of the innovation is perceived and communicated facilitate the overall understanding. This stage relates to all messages produced about SARA and how these are rhetorically communicated to the employees. (Rogers, 2003).
III. <i>The decision stage</i>	In this stage, the member decides to either adopt or reject the innovation. To facilitate the individual's choice of adapting rather than rejecting, a test period of the innovation will ease the decision. Rejection, however, can happen during any time of the process (Rogers, 2003). It is therefore essential to provide employees with relevant educational materials about SARA that suits the end users' needs and level of technical understanding.
IV. <i>The implementation stage</i>	In this stage, the actual innovation is implemented (i.e. SARA). Even though the innovation is in place, uncertainty will still be present. Therefore, change agents and opinion leaders (see subchapter 4.4) need to assist the rest of the organization in order to decrease the level of uncertainty among organizational members (Rogers, 2003).
V. <i>The confirmation stage</i>	In this stage, the individual has made their decision. However, the member might still want confirmation that her/his decision to adopt (or reject) was the right choice. The individual seek confirmation that supports their decision and the messages during this phase are therefore important. Conflicting messages can make the individual change their mind (Rogers, 2003). Confirming messages concerning the benefits of SARA are thus of importance also after the implementation within the PAUs.

Table 1. The five stages in the innovation-decision process
Source: Own illustration, based on Rogers (2003). Created in Word.

4.4 Opinion leaders and change agents

Rogers (2003) divides the members of a social system into different adopter categories. These include: Innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Members belongs to a classification on the basis of their innovativeness. Three characteristics that distinguish earlier adopters to later adopters are their personality values, socioeconomic status and communication behaviors. Especially interesting to this study are the communication behaviors, as early adopters tend to have broader social networks within the organization and externally, and some early adopters take on a role as opinion leaders (Rogers, 2003).

Opinion leaders are informal leaders within an organization who are able to influence other members' perceptions, attitudes and behaviors towards an innovation (Cho, Hwang, & Lee, 2012), thus the role as an opinion leader is not a formal working position or status (Rogers, 2003). Opinion leaders have more technical competence, experience and social accessibility to others, are more innovative, might have higher socioeconomic status and are exposed to more external communication compared to other members in a social system (Rogers, 2003; van Eck, Leeftang, & Jager, 2011) Furthermore, Rogers (2003), claims that opinion leaders are in the center of an organization's interpersonal social network, and this is where they influence the most. They are loyal to the organizations' norms, which can make the opinion leader to either accept or oppose a new innovation depending on if the innovation is aligned with the norms or not (Rogers, 2003). According to van Eck et al. (2011), opinion leaders can influence the diffusion process by increasing the speed of the process and by increasing the adoption percentage. Kim (2015) suggests that communication strategies should be designed for interpersonal and systematic social networks to assist the opinion leaders in their role. Both time and resources should be provided to help opinion leaders to socially engage in the diffusion process (Kim, 2015).

Change agents are the ones who are driving the change and want to obtain the adoption of an innovation. They influence the innovation-decision process in ways desired by the change management. Change agents often present innovations to the organizational members with the expectation that consequences will be as anticipated – direct and desirable outcomes. However, it commonly results in the opposite: unanticipated consequences, indirect and undesirable outcomes for the members. The reason behind this is because the change agents have difficulties in predict the soft factors, such as the subjective perceptions of the members, and instead only foresee the hard factors (Rogers, 2003). Jian (2007) points out that both senior management and employees can be change agents during a planned change. The senior management have the role to initiate the change, whilst the employees are implementing it. The planned activities during change are reciprocal between the two, and the way this connection is formed will have affect the process.

5. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodological approach of this study. Subchapter 5.1 present the research design, explains the research strategy from an epistemological approach, and the research method used to collect the data in form of focus group interviews. Subchapter 5.2 outlines the process of the operationalization of the interview guide, and subchapter 5.3 explains the pre-test. Following subchapter (5.4) explains how the data was collected and the sampling procedure, and the ethical considerations concerning this study. Subchapter 5.5 explains the steps followed in the qualitative thematic analysis. Subchapter (5.6) ends with a discussion on this study's limitations.

5.1 Research design

Since it is a change within a particular organization that is the subject to this study, the nature of the research is designed as a *case*. As Bryman (2012) explains, a case study explores the complexity and context of a particular case and there are various forms of cases, each entailing different characteristics. The specific case examined in this study is an organization – one Swedish county council (see Chapter 2). The case is considered to be a 'representative' case study as planned changes within organizations are common features in organizational life. The aim of this kind of case study is to capture the common context and key social processes. The most important aspect is not whether the data and findings can be generalized, but how theory can be generated out of these findings (Bryman, 2012).

Methodological approaches to a case study can be conducted through both quantitative and qualitative research. However, a qualitative research approach is suitable considering the exploratory nature of this study's research questions. The approach functions well in relation to the study purpose, which is to investigate and understand meanings to social patterns related to change communication in a specific context. A qualitative research approach is chosen based on three aspects. First, the approach gives the possibility to view the social world and the occurring events in it through the eyes of the participants. Second, qualitative research aims to understand deeper meanings underneath the 'surface', has an emphasis on detailed explanations and the specific context. Third, the approach shed light on people's social behaviors and attitudes (Bryman, 2012).

5.1.1 Research strategy

From an epistemological perspective, this study is based on a constructivist approach with a theoretical interpretivist perspective. The research approach is placed in the center of both a deductive and an inductive study, leaning towards an inductive approach. The author had an idea about which theory that was going to be central to the study and related some of the theoretical ideas and concepts to the research instrument and main coding. However, it is a central part of the analysis in a case study to let the theory be generated from the findings, which allows the study to have a more fluid inductive character. In order to capture both the constructed reality of the participants and the interpretivist research approach within the specific case, focus group interviews were chosen as a main method (Gray, 2018).

5.1.2 Research method: Focus groups

Since the 1990's, focus group interviewing as a qualitative method has become increasingly popular within various academic disciplines including communication, marketing, and strategic planning (Hartman, 2004). Focus group interviewing captures the participant's individual

views, attitudes and opinions as well as the collective construction of meaning within the group (Bryman, 2012). The method highlights the normative understandings that a group is practicing to reach collective knowledge (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). The author took notes during the focus group sessions regarding how the shared meanings were created through the discussions. The author pre-determined an interview guideline with semi-structured questions (see Appendix C) to allow topics to be explored and group exercises to stimulate discussion. As Bloor et al. (2001) note, the objective is to motivate discussion in the group rather than extract individual answers. Exercises are common tools, such as the activity of 'ranking'. The group agree upon the importance of certain statements and then prioritize these (Bloor et al., 2001). This exercise was included and performed by the focus group participants.

Considerations regarding the validity and reliability were reflected upon. Qualitative methods are criticized for not being as developed in these aspects compared to quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). To ensure validity in qualitative research it is central that the research instrument is transparent, and that evidence of the research results and the conclusions are convincing. To ensure reliability it is important to have an appropriate and systematic data collection and an analysis and interpretation of it (Given, 2008). The author kept the research transparent by keeping audit trails (audio recorded focus group sessions), transcripts, and a description of the research procedures and steps taken. Data was collected, analyzed and interpreted in a coherent way. Evidence in form of quotes from research participants are used to exemplify the data analysis, and the conclusions are closely connected to the findings.

5.2 Operationalization

The author developed the focus group interview guide with a mix of both inductively and deductively generated open-ended, semi-structured questions and exercises about SARA and the current communication. In order to know which questions that were relevant to ask (apart from connecting the interview questions to the research questions), the operationalization of the interview guide was inductively guided by information about the project and organizational structure, current communication, and common concepts and ideas from the case. Thus, the examination of the case served as a basis for developing the interview guide (e.g. Appendix C. Question 2). For example, the author asked questions about the specific communication channels used when communicating about SARA, and suggested pre-determined channels to discuss (currently used in the change project), however the participants were encouraged to suggest other channels that they perceived were missing or wished for the organization to use.

Additionally, the operationalization was partly guided by the state of research and the theoretical framework. For example, the concept "communication channels" was deductively guided by Rogers (2003) definition as the way information is being exchanged during the diffusion of innovations (e.g. Appendix C. 'Exercise 1. Range communication channels'). Challenges and drivers in change communication from the reviewed literature (see Chapter 3) assisted the author in developing the interview, and central concepts such as planned change and change communication. The concept of a planned change as guided by K. L. Lewis (2014), defining planned change as any controlled modification done within an organizational setting, such as processes or structures. The concept of change communication was guided by Lies (2012), as an internal strategic communication approach used by change management during change processes.

5.3 Pre-test

The pretesting of the interview guide was conducted in three steps. First, a first draft of the questions was discussed on a methodology workshop at Gothenburg university with feedback from teachers and students. Based on this, the order of the questions was changed to strengthen the red thread. The second step involved feedback from the author's university supervisor. From this revision, the author changed a repeated question and simplified the language to better fit the participants' understanding. The guide was further discussed between the author herself and her county council supervisors. This feedback contributed to the development of two group exercises. Lastly, the interview guide was tested by two Swedish participants, to examine the level of comprehension of the questions in general and to measure the time frame.

5.4 Data collection

The empirical data was collected by three focus group interviews. According to Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009), it is recommended to conduct three to six different focus groups to reach data – or theoretical saturation. Additionally, time and resources need to be considered (Bryman, 2012). The author followed the preparation checklist on focus group interviewing from Bryman (2012, p. 519). Two of the focus group interviews took place in one of the county council's conference buildings, and one interview was conducted in one of the county council's hospitals. Each focus group consisted of three individuals, and each session lasted between 50-70 minutes. The interviews were recorded through the author's private smartphone. The focus group interviews were held in Swedish.

In addition to the focus group interviews, the author attended project meetings concerning SARA, and was part of e-mail conversations regarding the project. The author was included in two collaboration spaces in the new IT-system and was invited to join the SARA group on the organization's social media platform. The author had access to the majority of the change project documents. The collected insights from this kind of access assisted the author in further broaden her understanding about the case.

5.4.1 Participants

The participants in this study were chosen based on the stratifying criteria that *the attending participants are employed by the county council and have some experience of and basic knowledge about the planned change project SARA*. Since the change project was in the starting phase of implementing SARA in the different PAUs at the time of this study, there was a limited number of potential participants to recruit. Employees with the stratifying criteria were limited to certain employees assigned with specific roles in the ongoing implementation of the change (subproject managers and pilot study participants). The participants derive from different working positions and locations within PAUs in the county council, and the PAUs in turn have different starting points relating to size, challenges and opportunities for implementation, level of adoption and organizational culture (Bryman, 2012).

The recruitment of focus group participants was mainly made through researcher-driven and key informant recruitment (Bryman, 2012). The main project group assisted the author by recommending participants with the stratifying criteria. When identified, the potential participants were invited through e-mail, doodle calendars and one face-to-face request during a pre-scheduled meeting. Unfortunately, one participant cancelled their attendance last minute before the last session. However, another participant with the same stratifying criteria offered

to join spontaneously. One should take into consideration that focus group three therefore not only consisted of pilot study participants but became a mixed group. This can have had an affect on the results; however, all three participants met the stratifying criteria. In total, nine participants attended. See participant details in Table 2.

Group 1					
Participant	Age	Employment in county council	Assigned role in SARA	Working position	Public Administration Unit
F1P1	61 years	21 years	Subproject manager	Administrative manager	County council hospitals
F1P2	58 years	5 years	Subproject manager	Executive secretary	Health and stress medicine
F1P3	45 years	6 months	Subproject manager	Administrative coordinator	Regions service

Group 2					
Participant	Age	Employment in county council	Assigned role in SARA	Working position	Public Administration Unit
F2P1	43 years	11 years	Subproject manager	Administrative secretary	Healthcare centers
F2P2	29 years	2 years	Subproject manager	Committee secretary	Patients' board secretariat
F2P3	35 years	3 years	Subproject manager	Committee secretary	Regions service

Group 3					
Participant	Age	Employment in county council	Assigned role in SARA	Working position	Public Administration Unit
F3P1	37 years	17 years	Subproject manager	Project manager	County council hospitals
F3P2	47 years	7 years	Pilot study participant	Medical secretary	County council hospitals
F3P3	34 years	10 years	Pilot study participant	Administrative assistant	County council hospitals

Table 2. A socio-demographic overview of the focus group participants.

Source: Own illustration, created in Excel.

5.4.2 Ethical considerations

Since this study is of qualitative nature with the researcher interacting with the participants during focus group interviews, it is of great importance that the researcher incorporates a reflexive view of oneself in the position as a researcher. This includes for example: being aware about the biases one has, and to be aware of that the process of collecting data and the physical presence of the researcher do affect the collection of data itself. The interpretation of the collected data will also be affected on a higher level by the researcher's background and biases compared to a pre-fixed anonymous quantitative survey (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). The author has a background in social anthropology where reflexivity of oneself and one's participants is an essential part of the discipline. The author focused on having an open mind to whatever opinions and ideas that were expressed and was aware of who she was perceived in relation to the participants. With a background in social anthropology and communication in combination with personal interests, the author was aware of that social and behavioral patterns in the data seemed more interesting to analyze compared to overall organizational structures (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2017).

Before each session, the author handed out an informed consent – and confidentiality sheet which explained and clarified the participants' rights, data collection safety and anonymity. All participants were requested to read the document and sign two copies. Furthermore, the participants were offered to ask if anything about the informed consent was unclear. They were also encouraged to contact the author if they had further questions. The questions asked during the sessions were not private. The conventions designed for the sessions were explained and agreed upon before the session. The author clarified the importance of not talking at the same time (to be able to transcribe the recorded audio), and that every individual's opinion is equally important.

5.5 Data analysis

A qualitative thematic analysis was carried out. The author chose the qualitative data analysis because its relevance to (a) this study's method. To inductively grasp shared meanings and ideas from the focus groups interviews, (b) to be able to highlight some theory-driven perspectives in these shared meanings, and (c) to discuss, examine and structure the complex data in a more comprehensible way through creation of themes (Braun et al., 2017). The author followed the recommended six steps in the analysis outlined and explained by Braun and Clarke (2006). See Table 3.

1) <i>Familiarizing oneself with the data set</i>	The recorded audio files were imported into the qualitative analysis software program NVivo Pro and transcribed word by word. The author noted initial ideas and (re)read the transcribed data.
2) <i>Generating initial codes</i>	The transcriptions were systematically coded in NVivo Pro, elucidating interesting features across the whole data set. The author gathered relevant data to each of the created codes. The codes were primarily inductive, i.e. the coding was mostly data-driven, however with some aspects with considerations to the theoretical framework.
3) <i>Searching for/generating themes</i>	In this step the author distinguished patterns and meanings, ideas and concepts that come across the data and that can be related to the research questions. Further, the author was collating the codes into a first scheme of potential themes and gathered all relevant codes to each potential theme.
4) <i>Reviewing themes</i>	During this step of reviewing and refinement, the themes were checked if they work in relation to both coded extracts and the entire data collection. The author created thematic maps of the analysis conducted (see Appendix E for earlier versions).
5) <i>Defining and naming themes</i>	Each theme was refined and further specified. Every theme was then given a name/label and a description of its centralized organized concept (see Subchapter 6.2 for final thematic map). The coding categories resulted in 90 codes (Appendix B), whereas 85 of the codes were grouped into the themes. The author did not find an appropriate theme for the remaining five codes, therefore, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), these five codes were marked as 'miscellaneous'.
6) <i>Producing the report</i>	The final step of analysis. The author selected extracts (quotes) from participants to represent and exemplify the themes and analysis of the data, relating back to the research questions, the literature and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, Guest et al. (2012) note that quotes are critical in defining and capturing the essence in the complex themes and that they serve as validity evidence. The quotes were interpreted and translated from Swedish to English by the author.

Table 3. The six steps of qualitative thematic analysis

Source: Own illustration, based on Braun and Clarke (2006), created in Word

5.6 Limitations

Like all research, this study has its own limitations. Firstly, the case study does merely examine one planned change within the organization at large. Because of the limited time and resources, only a part of the organization as a case was possible to include, even though the county council conducts several parallel change projects at the time. Furthermore, because of the generally limited knowledge about SARA within the county council at the time of data collection, only employees with an assigned role in SARA (subproject managers and pilot study participants) were included in the research. By including other employees of the organization that are not directly involved in the project might have broaden the diversity of the data. Furthermore, even though this study does not include perspectives on gender, one limitation is that only one out of nine participants were male. Lastly, theoretically this study takes a qualitative view of diffusion, which limit the study in the many modified and different versions of statistical and quantified models on DOI (Meade & Islam, 2006).

6. Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, the findings of the thematic analysis are presented and a discussion on the findings is provided. In subchapter 6.1, the author presents the final thematic map along with an analysis of the findings. Four themes and one subtheme were identified: (a) *Change Communication* (subtheme: *Responsibilities in Change Management*) (b) *A Complex, Large-scale Change*, (c) *Stakeholder Diversity*, and (d) *Opinion Leaders as Change Agents*. All quotes were translated from Swedish to English by the author (see original Swedish quotations in endnotes, Appendix F). In subchapter 6.2, the findings are discussed in relation to the literature, theoretical framework and research questions.

6.1 Findings: Four themes

In this subchapter the final thematic map is presented and the findings for each of the four themes are investigated. The final thematic map below (see Figure 3) illustrates the four distinctive themes created by interpreting the collected data. As the figure demonstrates, the four themes are interrelated. The *Change Communication* theme is the overarching theme, primarily because it can be associated and related to the three other themes. However, the themes are interrelated and the influence flow both ways. The *Change Communication* is the most complex theme, and the subtheme *Responsibilities in change management* was created to clarify this.

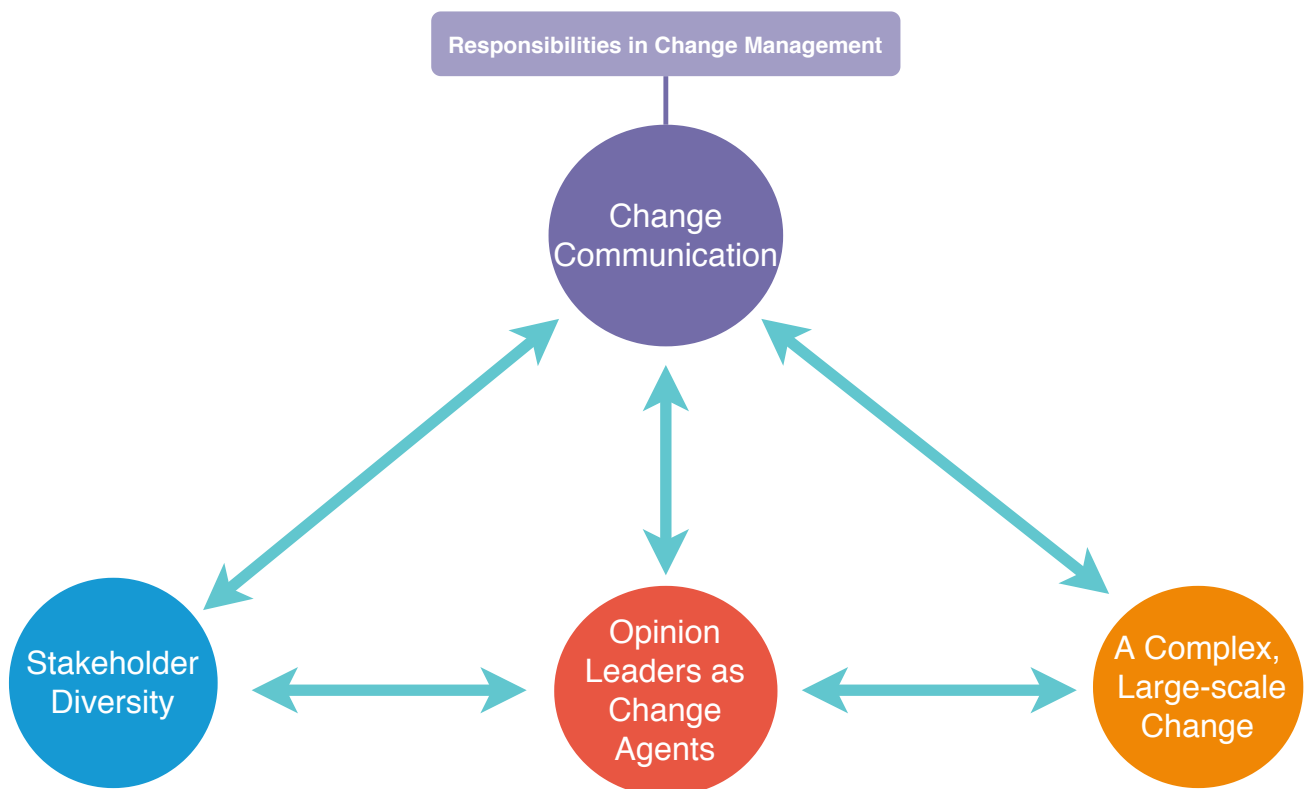


Figure 3. Final thematic map (see Appendix E for earlier developed maps)

Source: Own illustration, created in draw.io Diagrams

One central aspect in conducting focus group interviews is the examination of collectively created norms and shared meanings (Bloor et al., 2001). The focus groups were noticeably similar (and different) in characteristics and internal dynamics. However, what all focus groups had in common was the shared meanings on *uncertainty* during the change process. Although the groups created different perceptions of uncertainty, it was expressed, discussed and finally created as a shared meaning and an essential part of their perception about SARA. The aspect of uncertainty is therefore an important feature to reflect on while reading the findings and discussion.

(a) Change Communication

Firstly, the management is perceived as providing too many channels of information regarding general changes on digitalization within the organization: "I'm thinking that this is, it is, right now it feels like an orientation without compass [laughs] or without a map. I mean there are so many channels with information [...]"ⁱ (F1P2: 00:03:53.8 - 00:05:40.6). Secondly, the channels that are perceived as more effective are interpersonal. All three focus groups shared the opinion that an interpersonal, face-to-face channel is the most effective way to communicate change: "Yes, I always think that meetings are better than other forms of communication."ⁱⁱ (F3P1: 00:18:09.6- 00:18:16.4) and "Those meetings are worth gold. And that is why I really want to take part. I understand much more than if I'm attending through Skype."ⁱⁱⁱ (F1P3: 00:47:17.3- 00:47:22.7). Using physical meetings as a communication channel enables two-way communication, a way for employees to interact with their management and to have a dialogue with colleagues to exchange experiences. Patterns show that the participants want more of this type of interactive, face-to-face exchange during change: "But, I think that it in some ways would be very brilliant if people talk to each other, not only have physical meetings but that they can learn from each other."^{iv} (F2P3: 00:21:38.1- 00:22:20.3).

Thirdly, technical communication channels, both two-way (e.g. online calls) and one-way (e.g. organizational intranet and webinars) are also recognized by the groups as valuable tools for the management to communicate change. However, one contradicting finding compared to what the case study suggests (see subchapter 2.2.1) regarding one commonly used two-way communication channel, is the impression of e-mail. The county council is in many aspects e-mail focused. Yet, all three groups expressed a slightly negative, or much negative attitude towards e-mail as an effective channel. Mostly because of the idea that employees in their PAUs usually do not work with e-mail as supposed: "No, there are very few of our ordinary employees who use e-mail. Everyone has access to it but a very low percentage is actually using it."^v (F1P1: 00:16:50.1 - 00:17:01.8) and "Yeah, my experience is that generally they don't work with the calendar and e-mail as they should."^{vi} (F3P2: 00:19:41.5- 00:19:53.3).

Moving on to main messages, one shared meaning was that SARA should be communicated as a compulsory change: "They don't see this as something compulsory, okay we have to do it, but where in all this lays the regional director's order pointing at "this should be done now, and it has to be done, and it has priority"?"^{vii} (F2P1: 00:25:36.8- 00:26:25.2). Furthermore, findings show a desire of that the management is straight forward with their directives, keeps a clear change management role and a well-structured change process. Messages communicated by change management should, according to the findings, focus on getting the employees to understand the reason for change. Lastly, change communication should focus upon communicating benefits of the change and be pedagogical in nature.

Subtheme: Responsibilities in Change Management

Different perspectives were expressed through various of topics, touching upon what the current change management in general, and specifically what the SARA project, is lacking in order to execute a successful planned change. The topics are linked to the participants' perception on what responsibilities that the change management should have. For example, the lack of a structured planned change: "They have started with a lot of things and it doesn't feel like anything is really ready. And then it has to kind of be fixed along the way. And that feels a bit hasty."^{viii} (F2P2: 00:07:18.4 - 00:07:35.0). Another issue relates to the management not prioritizing SARA enough: "We have, my executive director has down prioritized this, because there are so many other things that are much more important."^{ix} (F2P1: 00:25:36.8 - 00:26:25.2). Also, the responsibility the management have to provide technical education to the organization's employees, and this was seen not to be provided enough. The findings indicate that the change management does not communicate their role in the change project in a clear way, which leaves employees with the idea of that the current change management is inadequate.

(b) A Complex, Large-scale Change

The participants' collective view on what characterizes SARA connects various internal and complex changes that come along as consequences of such an implementation. The participants discussed internal changes in various areas, for example how employees' new working routines (to think and work in new ways) contributes to uncertainty: "You have a certain way of doing things and then you should think in another way. Of course, this will trigger questions and "what is the benefit of it?" and "how is it?" and "how should one find things?"^x (F1P2: 00:39:23.4 - 00:39:57.8). There were also shared meanings on how the organizational culture has to transform for the change to become realized. Another central aspect is the complexity concerning county council's size, with its approximately 55 000 employees and twenty-five PAUs. The PAUs are in turn unique when it comes to size, their current level of adoption, the challenges, and to which extent and in which ways SARA will affect the PAUs.

The development of a more digitalized organization is perceived as positive: "Spontaneously I would say it feels like we're taking a step into modern times. At home practically everything's digitalized. Then at work you go back to the 1800s. That doesn't feel right. I think this is super fun, and about time."^{xi} (F3P1: 00:01:30.0 - 00:01:51.5) and SARA is partly perceived as a positive aspect of that type of modernization: "Now at least we will get organized, and in maybe five to ten years we will see the effect of it."^{xii} (F1P1: 00:08:13.6 - 00:08:49.7). The more negative perspectives on digitalization concern its vulnerability and limitations: "But I also think the systems are constraining sometimes, there is a lot of focus on systems and things like that limits creativity and local solutions."^{xiii} (F2P2: 00:04:45.2 - 00:05:18.6). This kind of dual viewpoint of the organizational development contributes to the complexity – employees are both positive and negative towards the digitalization, which can halt their adaptation and acceptance to the digitalized IT-system. Words such as "threshold" and "uphill" were mentioned when discussing the complexity, however words such as "great" and "in order" were also mentioned as outcomes of that complexity.

(c) Stakeholder Diversity

The third theme contains patterns concerning the county council employees as diverse individuals, each with personal opinions and experiences. The central organized concept is based on the idea that people are different. One perception is that changes do affect members

of an organization, and another relevant aspect touched upon the internal stakeholders' different methods of coping with change: "You learn and cope with it in different ways, and it has a different level of importance for different people."^{xiv} (F3P1: 00.06.28.3-00.07.37.0). Changes were discussed in relation to an individual's uncertainty: "You as an individual employee should manage to understand and make use of it, that I think many experiences like "will I really manage to do this", there's an uncertainty surrounding it. And also, people are very tired of new systems."^{xv} (F3P2: 00:46:29.2 - 00:47:02.0). Ideas on unwillingness and resistance were discussed as a way to explain employee dissatisfaction with the change process: "But no, it's just that, what was I going to say, I think there is like a latent resistance to it."^{xvi} (F1P2: 00.13.00.8-00.13.31.0).

Aspects regarding the internal stakeholders' diverse levels of maturity, especially in relation to technical experiences and knowledge were discussed: "The transition now to this new will become the same, those who knows very little will have a more difficult time to get into it. And those who already work a lot with it is probably having it a lot easier."^{xvii} (F3P2: 00:08:51.6 - 00:09:55.6). However, the overall viewpoint on the level of technical maturity in the organization was perceived as generally low. A shared meaning in focus group two was that the employees cannot only be seen as passive receivers, however they should recognize their own individual responsibility to adopt: "However it feels like it's important to understand that "this is my responsibility as well, no matter if I can turn to [name] for support, the responsibility still lays on me" and this is connected to the thing about decisions....and."^{xviii} (F2P3: 00:24:32.0 - 00:25:07.1).

Lastly, this theme includes perceptions on how organizational members becomes motivated to adapt, and patterns shows that the idea of things being 'in place, in order' is of central value, and that this could contribute to a more unified organization: "And then it creates an order and everyone knows and everyone works the same, based on the same conditions."^{xix} (F1P1: 00.46.23.7-00.46.29.0). Other aspects were related to trust that SARA is a well-functioning system. Explicit structure of the change process and provided support from management was important to the participants. This theme shows how essential it is for the change management to recognize the organizational internal diversity and to form a change communication approach accordingly.

(d) Opinion Leaders as Change Agents

The last theme concerns shared meanings on subproject managers' and pilot project participants' roles in the change process. Firstly, the data found that the subproject managers (and pilot study participants) work in a two-sided role. They work with assigned roles for SARA *and* they continue to work with their usual jobs within the county council. The participants work with administrative tasks and therefore have more experience and knowledge about technical and digitalized aspects compared to their fellow colleagues. When discussing who is the most important source of information to others during change processes, all three groups considered an employee with technical knowledge and experience (and specifically about SARA) as most essential: "I think it would be someone who understands what document management is and who's working a lot with it."^{xx} (F3P1: 00:31:15.5 - 00:31:16.5). Furthermore, they shared meanings on the importance of motivating other employees by being good role models: "[...] to be negative yourself or having some kind of like "um I don't know" will bring ripples on the water."^{xxi} (F3P2: 00:55:49.0 - 00:56:30.4).

Another pattern was the joint meanings regarding the participants own professional role in SARA. This role relates to aspects connected to communication: how one can best possibly communicate the change to the rest of the PAU in order for SARA to be successful. One aspect was about the uncertainty in what to communicate about. This concern was grounded in an overall lack of information about change project details: “Yeah, because now I’m just as new in this, and how am I then supposed to present this?”^{xxii} (F1P1: 00.08.54.0-00.08.59.5). To manage communication in one’s role was also related to the challenge of how to reach out with information about SARA: ”But then it’s also to reach down with the information to the one who’s actually going to work with it, that I see as a pretty big challenge [...]”^{xxiii} (F2P3: 00:47:52.4 - 00:48:19.0). Balancing authority in a position of managing documents was considered as a communication challenge for those responsible for shared collaboration spaces in SARA. Furthermore, the groups shared feelings on being responsible for the change to succeed as a result of one’s work, without having real power over the outcome: “[...] you feel responsible for it to be like really good. Even though you haven’t really had any major possibilities to effect the outcome anyway.”^{xxiv} (F2P2: 00:51:41.9 - 00:52:02.7). Finally, another pattern showed that the subproject managers wants more exchange of experiences.

6.2 Discussion

This study’s findings are found to be consistent with Lies (2012) explanation of that change communication is the soft, inevitable part of the hard factor driven change management. Empirical findings show that change communication and change management are interrelated, and that the overarching theme *Change Communication* is directly linked to what the participants perceived as change managements’ main responsibility during change: namely, as Lies (2012) also recognizes: the internal and strategic stakeholder management. Furthermore, Allen et al. (2007) points out the importance of trust in the change management in providing sufficient job-related information to employees during change. Empirical findings show that not enough engagement, priority or high-quality information is communicated to the employees, which lower the trust for the management to handle their responsibilities and the trust for SARA as a successful change project. The findings in the subtheme *Responsibilities in change management* are in consistency with Covin and Kilmann’s (1990) results on negative impact aspects concerning lack of management support, lack of meaningful participation and poor communication, and the desire of being provided with positive impact aspects: management support and commitment, early preparations, and encouraging employee participation.

Recognizing the members of an organization as a diversified group of internal stakeholders is necessary in order for change management to develop a change communication approach that is relevant for both change objectives and adopters (L. K. Lewis, 2007, 2011). The theme *Stakeholder Diversity* highlights the necessity of not treating the organization as one entity and not to make a decision to implement a large-scale change without considering the internal diversity. Furthermore, similarly to both Dearing (2006) and Rogers (2003), this study finds that communication channels are of crucial importance during the whole process of the individual’s innovation-decision process. Here, the change management have a chance to persuade the employee through the channels that are most effective. Empirical findings show that although interpersonal channels are used to some degree (through physical meetings and presentations), these channels, and especially those including interactive activities such as workshops, experience exchange and dialogues are the most effective and persuasive. According to Allen et al. (2007), one-way communication strategies focusing on overall change

strategies are not sufficient. Therefore, a two-way communication approach from organizational management is of central concern to successful change. Contrary to the statements made by Lundblad (2003), this study shows that the two most effective communication channels are interpersonal and mass media, in consistency with Rogers (2003). Additionally, change communication should be kept simple and not always take advantage of new technological channels. The most significant factor is to provide employees with early information about the change project and to keep the dialogue with the employees fluid through the process, and this can be communicated with an interpersonal, face-to-face channel (Düren, 2016). The empirical findings show that the current information flow is perceived as delivered in too many formats and channels, making employees feel “lost” in the information seeking process. The great extent of information adds on to the importance of interpersonal communication channels.

Findings in *A complex, large-scale change* are found to be in consistency with the literature concerning that SARA consists of a complex interaction between management and internal stakeholders (Miller, 2014), and that SARA is a technical software, a more difficult innovation to adopt due to its highly abstract level (Rogers, 2003).

Furthermore, communicated messages should focus upon the attributes of the innovation and persuade the employees that the innovation is not too complex, but rather have a relative advantage and allows testing during the implementation, fits well with the social system’s norms and clearly shows visible results (Rogers, 2003). However, the change is at some cases perceived as too complex, the relative advantage to older (or other) systems is not clear enough and the innovation is not perceived as a change that goes in line with many of the PAUs main area of work (e.g. healthcare). While one main message for SARA is “it should be easy to do it right”, and another is about being a role model within Swedish public administration – the management seem to not have succeeded to persuade the employees with these messages. This aspect confirms that SARA is not communicated in a comprehensible and persuasive way.

To add on to the complexity of the change, the large-scale size have an effect on the organization. Lundblad (2003) and her critique to Rogers (2003) definition of a social system correlates with the empirical findings: participants in this study thought it is important to take the size of the county council into consideration. The change becomes complex as the organization is large and consists of more than one social system. Different PAUs have their own internal organizations, different departments, subgroups and social networks. Additionally, the PAUs exist in relation to the county council as a whole and to external and internal stakeholders.

Empirical findings from *Opinion leaders as Change Agents* show that participants of the study share the characteristics of both change agents *and* informal opinion leaders. For example, the subproject managers and pilot project participants are among those organizational members that Rogers (2003) calls ‘early adopters’. Moreover, the participants in the study have professional administrative roles (i.e. they have general technical experience) that often connects them to different departments and subgroups within their PAUs. Additionally, they also have assigned roles in SARA. Subproject managers are working to implement SARA in their PAU, while pilot project participants have a role as pre-testers and evaluators. Particularly the subproject managers are in this way included in a broader organizational context; they take part of both external organizational perspectives and communication through their dual working positions,

as they have parallel insights to local structures, challenges and communication for their PAUs. These aspects are related to Rogers (2003) point on opinion leaders being more exposed to external communication, and that they have a higher accessibility to organizational members compared to other employees. With other words, several of the participants could potentially become opinion leaders in their PAU, if they are not already.

The subproject managers also possess the characteristics of change agents: they do serve as change agents in their PAU by working to influence their fellow co-workers' personal innovation-decision processes through change communication (Rogers, 2003). They are in charge for the implementation, and as the findings show, they feel great responsibility for the change to be successful. As Rogers (2003) points out, change agents often have difficulties with foreseeing the soft factors, such as employees' subjective perceptions on the change process. With subproject managers and pilot project participants in a dual role as *opinion leaders as change agents*, they might have a better understanding of the innovation-decision process and thus can develop more effective change communication, and in this way promote diffusion and lower the resistance (Kim, 2015). At the same time, they can provide the change management with valuable information on the ongoing diffusion that could help develop the overall change process and communication.

Findings show that to balance the two roles is important. The subproject managers currently feel alone in their role and they are lacking important information. Their uncertainty can lead to a diffusion of resistance and uncertainty instead of acceptance among other employees. Furthermore, the participants of the study are not persuaded enough to positively influence other colleagues. Therefore, the organization need to work on change communication strategies that give opinion leaders an advantage in their role (i.e. focus on interpersonal networks), and time and resources should be prioritized to provide opinion leaders with possibilities to engage in social networks (Kim, 2015). There is a fine line between the two, and the change management should be careful not to overuse their opinion leaders as they can be perceived as too much of professional change agents instead, which can decrease their informal influence (Rogers, 2003).

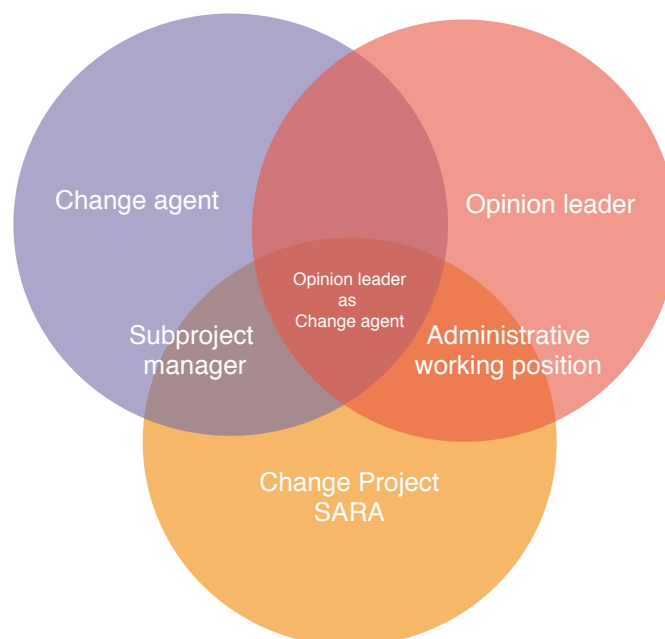


Figure 4: Illustration on the dual role of subproject managers
Source: Own illustration, created in Draw.io. Diagrams

7. Conclusion

Changes are common aspects of organizational development, and during planned change, communication is an essential key to ensure a successful change that meets organizational objectives, goals and expectations. This study had the purpose of examining employees' perceptions and shared meanings on the planned change project SARA, and what communication aspects that are considered to be the most significant during change. The study also explored enabling and constraining communication aspects in change processes. To achieve this objective, this study was conducted as a case study, focusing on a change project within a Swedish county council. Three focus group interviews were conducted, and the collected data was analyzed through a qualitative thematic analysis. The author identified four themes and one subtheme that were discussed in relation to the DOI theory (Rogers, 2003), relevant literature and the research questions. These research questions are answered below:

RQ1. How is the ongoing planned change project SARA perceived by SARA subproject managers and pilot study participants in the county council?

The findings show that participants of this study perceive SARA as a complex, large-scale change that is in need of a more persuasive, strategic and employee-focused change communication to be successful. This perception was based on the idea of that people within an organization are different, and thus the management is required to develop change communication strategies that allow all employees to understand, learn and participate in the change. Furthermore, the participants perceived the change process as facing various of difficulties within key areas such as inadequate change management and communication, as well as poor guidelines for subproject managers' role in SARA. Conclusions can be drawn that organizational processes, structures and change management is in need of improvement in their strategies concerning change communication and change management. In doing so, the county council will help reduce employees' overall uncertainty.

RQ2. What change communication aspects do SARA subproject managers and pilot study participants perceive as the most significant for a successful planned change?

Findings suggest a various range of significant communication aspects to consider when implementing change. First, the most important conclusion is that two-way communication, through an interpersonal, face-to-face channel, is perceived as the *most persuasive* and *most effective* way to mediate change to the county council's members. Other two-way digital channels were also appreciated and should work as complementary to interpersonal channels.

Secondly, it is not only through which channels change is communicated that are important. It is also necessary to develop a strategy on what content messages should contain. Conclusions can be drawn that messages should include a) change management commitment, engagement and priority to the change, b) preparatory messages should be sent out early in the change process, c) messages should not only include visions, strategies and objectives, however also a what 'it's in it for you' - perspective (i.e. work-related issues, such as possibilities for education, time plans and what the innovation will improve for the individual), and d) inclusive messages that are asking for feedback throughout the process.

RQ2a. What change communication aspects are perceived as enabling or constraining the ongoing change process?

The sub-question is answered together with practical implications. Findings show that *how* change is communicated by change management has a crucial impact on the success of planned changes. In large-scale public organizations like the county council, enabling change communication aspects implies the creation of various physical spaces for interactive meetings, with focus on dialogue, exchange of experiences and educational workshops. By allowing employees to express their fears and uncertainty in such a forum, and to meet critique and answer questions, will not only reduce the risk of resistance to or rejection of SARA but reinforce inclusion and participation. Constraining aspects in change communication are related to the employee's uncertainty about the complexity of the change. If the change management do not provide (or communicate that these options are available) enough educational materials, workshops or support, it will constrain the diffusion of the innovation. Furthermore, the county council is highly diverse because of its large-scale size. The participants of this study recognized this aspect as one major constraint for the diffusion of SARA. Therefore, it is of great importance for the change management, both locally and regionally, to recognize the internal organizational diversity (both organizational culture(s) and employees) when mediating change. Lastly, findings conclude that subproject managers roles in SARA as both opinion leaders and change agents could be used as both enabling *and* constraining influences during change processes. The course of direction will be determined by the preconditions set by the change management and their change communication.

Future research

This study contributes with knowledge to the academic field of organizational change communication and to organizations who seek to improve their planned change processes. However, there are still aspects to explore concerning this topic. To strengthen the qualitative data findings and conclusions of this study, the author suggests further exploration of change processes and change communication in the county council through a larger, quantitative study. The researcher can through such a study investigate large-scale patterns of employee perceptions and attitudes. Furthermore, similar future research on other large-scale public organizations would be interesting, and by contrasting different cases through a comparative design could improve and deepen the understanding regarding how organizations differentiate in their change communication in relation to their successful (or unsuccessful) planned changes.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Background information: SARA

Current change communication

The overview below is foremost based on documents such as the project directive, the project communication plan, newsletters, e-mails and the organization's intranet. Commonly used channels and messages are explored. How the individual PAUs differ in their change communication have not been taken into consideration.

Channels

The different channels used to communicate about SARA are both one-way and two-way channels, as well as digital and physical, however the most commonly used are digital channels.

In general, the most commonly used channel within the county council is *e-mail*. It is used to reach out with information regarding project status, invitations to physical- and online meetings. *Online- and videocall meetings* is a popular tool which allows employees to participate in virtual meetings. This channel is also used when an employee is not physically present, however, the majority of meetings are fully conducted through the online- and videocall channel. The organization's *social media channel* functions as a platform for employees assigned with a role in SARA to be part of online groups. Here one can ask open questions to colleagues and the main project group. The main project group posts updates and information on a regular basis through this channel. The new IT-system consists of *online collaboration workspaces*, which is another digital channel. The employees with an assigned role in SARA have access to one of these collaboration workspaces that has the purpose to provide them with important sources of information. This collaboration workspace is also a way for the subproject managers to learn about the technical aspects of the new IT-system. The *county council intranet* is a channel that contains general project information, where all members of the organization can receive general updates and an overview of SARA. Lastly, the main project group facilitate the PAUs with *educational materials* regarding the technical aspects of the IT-system. These come in different formats. The employee can learn by reading an online manual, through pre-recorded short instruction videos, and through a series of online courses in the organization's learning platform. Another way to keep oneself updated is through prerecorded webinars.

Except from the digital channels above, the main project group use *physical meetings and presentations* as channels to facilitate managers, subproject managers- and pilot participants with regards to the implementation and understanding of SARA. These meetings are usually pre-structured and include presentations with little exchange or dialogue between participants, however, the participants commonly to ask questions.

Key messages

The key messages used were identified through project documents, meetings, materials and through the channels described above. The key messages about why the planned change has been introduced and its importance for the county council was identified. Firstly, the change is communicated as a strategy for the county council to reach its overall goal to be a role model in public administration. Secondly, the change is communicated as "it should be easy to do it

right.”² This message aims to tell employees that it should be easy for everyone to use the IT-system and to know how to work with documents according to the Swedish law. This is yet another key message – it is necessary for the county council to develop in order to meet the Swedish standard of public access to public documents. The change is therefore both communicated as a driver and enabler to create an innovative and modern organization, and as a strategy, for the organization to keep up with the digitalization of organizations. However, at the same time the IT-system is communicated as necessary for the county council to meet the requirements of Swedish law.

² ”Det ska vara lätt att göra rätt” (Main message in Swedish)

Appendix B. Coding Categories

The codebook was created in and extracted from NVivo Pro and modified in Excel. The themes named in the categories are named after the “final thematic map”.

Folder	Name	Description	Files	References
Nodes	Miscellaneous	Codes that does not belong to any of the themes.	0	0
Nodes	Miscellaneous\Learn from pilot study	What insights the pilot study gives or does not give to the change project.	2	19
Nodes	Miscellaneous\Main project group	The employees within the main project group responsible for the initiated implemented IT system throughout the organization.	2	4
Nodes	Miscellaneous\Online information	A good source of information about the change and to educate oneself about the IT system is through the different information materials that exist online.	3	14
Nodes	Miscellaneous\Subproject	The subproject group is responsible for the implementation of SARA in their public administration unit.	2	7
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management	Organizational management is perceived to have several essential responsibilities during a change process.	0	0
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management\Engagement and prioritizing change	The level of engagement and priority the management give to the change process.	3	15
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management\Managers' low reliability	Employees have a low reliability towards their managers and prioritize these as the least valuable people to turn to if s/she does not understand the change.	3	17
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management\Prioritize economic change resources	The economic resources should be prioritized by management in order for the change to be successful.	3	18
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management\Structured management	The change project is lacking instructions from management on processes and how it is structured.	3	43
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management\Structured management\Planned change should be prepared	The planned change is perceived as not ready to be implemented on several different aspects.	2	11
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management\Structured management\Right employee on right position	Importance of that the right employee working in the right position (i.e. working with tasks that s/he is knowledgeable in).	1	2
Nodes	Subtheme - Responsibilities in change management\Technical education	Providing technical education is an essential key to successful change.	3	23
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change	The SARA project is perceived as a multidimensional complex change process for the organization to successfully accomplish.	0	0

Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\A complicated project	The change project is perceived as complicated for everyone involved, on all levels of the organization.	2	9
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\A complicated project\Difficult to foresee end results	Unsure of what the change will lead to and how the end results will turn out.	1	4
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\A large-scale change	The SARA project is perceived as a large-scale change.	3	12
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Digitalization as a constraint	The undergoing digitalization in the organization constrain the employees in their work.	3	30
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Digitalization as a constraint\Program licenses	License authorization for IT systems and programs for employees is a result of the constraints in digitalization	2	10
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Digitalization as a constraint\To find information	It is difficult for employees to find the information they need because of the complexity of digitalization.	3	10
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Digitalization as a constraint\To prioritize information	The organization provide its employees with too much information, which makes it difficult for employees to know which information should be prioritized.	1	8
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Digitalization as an asset	Digitalization is an asset in work and helps the organization to develop.	3	16
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Digitalization as an asset\A positive change	The SARA project is positive and will have positive effects on work for employees as well as for the organization as a whole.	3	23
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Digitalization as an asset\A positive change\Ordning och reda	A Swedish expression meaning "in order". The SARA project is positive because it will bring order to the working processes concerning documents.	3	21
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Organizational culture	The culture of the organization	2	4
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Public Administrations are different	The public administrations within the organization are different in size, processes, main responsibilities and organizational cultures.	2	7
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Public Administrations are different\Prioritized work tasks	Prioritized work tasks differ depending on public administration unit and employee job position. Therefore there are different levels of ability to learn and adopt to the change.	3	15
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Think in new ways	The change requires employees adopt to new ways of thinking.	3	8
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Think in new ways\Present working routines	Routines and procedures that employees have in their current daily work.	3	14
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Think in new ways\Work in new ways	The change require new working procedures.	3	13

Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Thresholds during change	There are thresholds to pass in order for change to happen.	3	10
Nodes	Theme - A complex, large-scale change\Time to adopt to change	It takes time to adopt to change. Members of the organization need time to adopt to SARA.	3	43
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication	The current organizational management change communication is perceived partly effective and partly ineffective.	0	0
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Communicate about change	The current communication by management about the change project SARA	3	28
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Communicate about change\Compulsory change	The change should be communicated by the management as compulsory and necessary to adopt to.	3	42
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Communicate about change\Trust the change	Employees have to trust that the change is good for their working conditions as well as for the development of the organization.	2	5
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Communicate about change\Understand the reason for change	To understand the reason for change is important. There is a lack of understanding among employees on why the change is necessary.	3	15
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Communicate about change\Understand the reason for change\Understand benefits of change	Show employees the benefits that comes along with the change in order to motivate them to adopt to it.	3	10
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication	Communication channels that are designed as one-way (sender - receiver).	0	0
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication\Intranet	The intranet used by all members of whole organization.	2	10
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication\News letter	News letters are sent out to the members of the organization.	1	1
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication\Online courses	Online courses about the new IT system change that all members can attend in order to understand the technical aspects regarding SARA.	3	7
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication\Online manual	Online manual where all information regarding the new IT system SARA is collected. It includes instructions in forms of text, pictures and videos.	2	6
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication\Regional decisions	Regional decisions that originate from top level management and considers the organization as a whole.	1	2

Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication\Tech instruction videos	Technological instruction videos where employees can watch and learn how to use the new IT system SARA.	3	21
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\One-way communication\Webinars	Webinars contain recorded meetings and other important physical gatherings that employees can watch afterwards.	3	7
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication	Communication channels that are designed as two-way (sender - receiver - sender).	0	0
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\E-mail	E-mail is sent back and forth between sender and receivers.	3	18
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\New IT system's collaborative workspace	Information is shared between the members of the collaborative workspace (that is also part of the new IT system).	3	6
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\Online calls	Online calls with or without video and with or without shared desktop.	3	16
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\Organizational social media	The organization's own social media platform where all members of the organization can share information, ideas and experiences.	3	25
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\Physical meetings	Physical face-to-face meetings where the sender and receiver(s) meet face-to-face as a way to communicate the change to the organization's members.	3	18
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\Physical meetings\Dialogue	Physical face-to-face meetings with the possibility for the employees to have a dialogue with the sender, to ask questions and discuss issues regarding the change.	1	7
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\Physical meetings\Technical workshops	Physical face-to-face meetings with the structure of a workshop, including practical training with computers where employees can try and learn about the new IT system from a knowledgeable facilitator.	1	1
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\Physical meetings\Workshops	Physical face-to-face meetings with an exchange of ideas and experiences, and the possibility to learn from each other.	1	3
Nodes	Theme - Change Communication\Two-way communication\Telephone	Calling with traditional telephone or mobile phone.	3	10
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents	Opinion leaders: employees within the organization that can influence other employees with their opinions about the change because of their technical knowledge, their broad interpersonal social networks within the organization and loyalty to the organizational norms (Rogers, 2003). Change agents/leaders: employees/managers who are influencing the innovation-decision process. Change agents/leaders use opinion leaders in diffusion. They present new innovations to the organization. (Rogers, 2003)	0	0
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Coworker I trust	A coworker the employee trust.	3	8

Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Coworker with technical experience	A coworker who has more technical experience and knowledge in comparison to other coworkers in the organization.	2	19
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Coworker with technical experience\Employee within IT section	Employees working within the IT section of the organization (regional or in one of the public administration units)	3	7
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Coworker with technical experience\Employee within org. archive	Employees that have the overall responsibility of the organizational archive, both archive managers and archive accountants.	1	15
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Coworker with technical experience\Executive assistant	The executive secretary/assistant within one of the public administration units.	1	5
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Coworker with technical experience\SARA-administrator	The employee who has the local, overall responsibility for the SARA IT system in one public administration unit after it is implemented.	2	17
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Coworker with technical experience\Super user	Employees who are especially knowledgeable within the new IT system SARA, and have an assigned role to answer other employee's questions about it.	2	9
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\Employee within public administration unit	An unspecified employee who work within any of the public administration units.	1	2
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager	The perceptions on the role of the subproject manager within the SARA change project.	0	0
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Balancing authority	Balancing one's authority a subproject manager and opinion leader can be difficult.	3	13
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Competence in change project	The competence a subproject manager need to perform in their role.	2	8
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Competence in change project\Sharing and exchanging experiences	The need to share and exchange ideas and experiences regarding the change.	3	13
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Difficult to motivate others	It is difficult to motivate others to adopt to change.	2	7
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Lack of knowledge	The perception that one has a lack of knowledge regarding the ongoing change.	3	29
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Prepare employees	Prepare employees for the change that will happen.	2	8
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Prepare employees\New work equals less old work	The change comes with new working tasks and at the same time, old working tasks and routines disappear.	1	5

Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Prepare employees\Positive feedback motivates work	The importance of feedback about the change project from other employees.	1	1
Nodes	Theme - Opinion leaders as change agents\One's role as subproject manager\Responsible for success in change	It is a subproject manager's responsibility to make sure the change is realized in their public administration unit.	2	4
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity	The stakeholder diversity within the county council is perceived as broad. Employees are different and therefore think and react differently on changes in work. People also learn in different ways and during different phases of time.	0	0
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Change entail uncertainty	Change entail uncertainty for members in an organization.	3	13
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Change entail uncertainty\Resistance to change	There is a resistance to change among members within the organization.	3	15
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Individual responsibility to adopt	Employees have an individual responsibility to adopt to change.	2	5
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Individual ways to cope with change	People cope and react with change in individual ways.	3	14
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Level of maturity	The degree to which the employee is mature enough to adopt to change.	2	4
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Level of maturity\Level of technical experience	Employees have different practical experience in using technology and IT systems.	2	8
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Level of maturity\Level of technical knowledge	The level of technical knowledge among employees is perceived as generally low.	3	19
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Motivation to adopt	Aspects of motivation that drives employees to adopt to the change.	0	0
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Motivation to adopt\Convinced it is good	Motivation of adoption is higher if the employee is convinced that the IT system is good.	3	4
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Motivation to adopt\Easy system	Motivation of adoption is higher if the system is perceived as made easy to use and to understand.	2	7

Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Motivation to adopt\Explicit structure	Motivation of adoption is higher if there is a clear change project structure and well organized work processes, and it should be easy to find information.	2	5
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Motivation to adopt\Management and support	Motivation of adoption is higher if the organizational management provide guidance and support to the organizational members during the change process.	1	2
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\Motivation to adopt\Unified organization	Motivation of adoption is higher if employees have the same working routines when working with documents.	3	9
Nodes	Theme - Stakeholder diversity\People wants to adopt	It is perceived that employees have a will to adopt to the change as long as they are given the right conditions to do so.	1	3

Appendix C. Interview guide

The interview guide in this study was originally written in Swedish. The questions have been translated to English by the author and are stated in brackets after each question or paragraph. Additionally, to the semi-structured interview guide below, the author asked context- and group discussion-based follow-up questions to the participants during the focus group sessions. Hence, those questions are not found below.

Intervjuguide fokusgrupp (*Focus group interview guide*)

I. Uppvärmningsfråga (Warm-up question):

1. Många organisationer genomgår just nu stora förändringar när det gäller digitalisering av deras verksamheter. Även detta landsting arbetar på olika områden med att bli en mer digitaliserad organisation. Vad tänker ni om att mycket av det ni arbetar med blir mer och mer digitaliserat? (*Today, many organizations undergo large changes in digitalization at their work. This county council is also working on different areas with becoming a more digitalized organization. What do you think about that much of what you work with becomes more and more digitalized?*)

- **Varför tycker/tänker du så?** (*Why do you feel/think this way?*)

II. Diskussionsfrågor (Discussion questions)

2. SARA projektet är ju en del av den 'digitala dokumenthanteringsplanen' för åren 2015–2020. Hur känner ni generellt kring projektet SARA? (*The SARA project is part of the 'digital document management plan' for the years 2015-2020. What do you feel about the SARA project in general?*)

3. Hur skulle ni vilja bli kommunicerade med om den förändring som sker i det nya arbetssättet i dokumenthantering? (ni kan utgå från olika perspektiv, t.ex. från landstingets styrning eller SARA projektet). (*How would you say that you want to be communicated to about the change that is happening in the new way of working with document management? (you can emanate from different perspectives, e.g. from the county council management or the SARA project)*)

- **Vad tycker ni saknas idag?** (*What do you think is missing today?*)

Övning 1. Rangordna kommunikationskanaler (Exercise 1. Range communication channels)

4. Om ni tänker på hur kommunikationen om SOFIA når ut till er och andra anställda, vilka kommunikationskanaler om det förändrade arbetssättet tror ni är de viktigaste respektive minst viktiga för den anställda inom landstinget? (*Think about how the communication about SARA is reaching you and other employees, which communication channels about the changed way of working do you think are the most important versus the least important for employees in the county council?*)

Här är ett antal av de kommunikationskanaler som används idag (visa korten). Diskutera tillsammans och rangordna korten efter vad ni tycker är viktigast/ger bäst genomslagskraft respektive minst viktig/ger minst genomslagskraft. Ni kan skriva på egna kort om ni tycker att något alternativ saknas, eller ta bort något som känns oviktigt. *(Presented here are a few of those communication channels that are used today (show the cards). Discuss together and arrange the cards from what you think is most important/have most impact versus least important/have the least impact. You can write on your own cards if you think any alternative is missing or take away any card that you think is unimportant.)*

- **Onlinekurs i Ping Pong** *(Online course in Ping Pong)*
 - **Manualen online** *(The online manual)*
 - **Samarbetsytan i Sharepoint (t.ex. dokument, presentationer om SARA)** *(The collaboration space in Sharepoint (e.g. documents, presentations about SARA))*
 - **Fysiska möten och presentationer** *(Physical meetings and presentations)*
 - **Sociala medier, t.ex. Yammer (t.ex. stödgrupp)** *(Social media, e.g. Yammer (e.g. support group))*
 - **Intranätet (Insidan)** *(The intranet (Insidan))*
 - **Smartass-filmer i Vimeo** *(Smartass-movies in Vimeo)*
 - **E-mail** *(E-mail)*
 - **Telefon** *(Telephone)*
 - **Videosamtal, t.ex. Skype** *(Video calls, e.g. Skype)*
 - **Webbinarium (inspelade möten och presentationer)** *(Webinars (recorded meetings and presentations))*
 - **Eget förslag** *(Own suggestions)*
- **Varför har ni rangordnat korten såhär? Hur tänkte ni? Varför tänkte ni så?** *(Why have you arranged the cards in this way? How did you think? Why did you think like this?)*

Övning 2. Rangordna viktiga personer *(Exercise 2. Range important persons)*

5. Vem skulle ni personligen välja att vända er till i första hand om ni behöver hjälp att förstå syftet med och användningen av det nya dokumenthanterings-systemet? *(Who would you personally choose to primarily turn to if you need help to understand the purpose with and the usage of the new document management system?)*

Här är några alternativ på anställda inom landstinget (visa korten). Diskutera tillsammans och rangordna korten efter vem ni skulle tagit hjälp av. (Kanske är det olika beroende på om ni vill förstå syftet eller användningen?) Ni kan skriva egna kort om ni tycker att någon saknas, eller ta bort något kort som ni tycker är oviktigt. *(Presented here are a few alternatives on employees within the county council (show the cards). Discuss together and arrange the cards after whom you would ask for help. (Maybe this is different depending on if you want to understand the purpose or usage?) You can write your own cards if you think anyone is missing, or take away any card that you think is unimportant)*

- **Närmsta chef** (*Closest manager*)
- **Annan chef** (*Other manager*)
- **Kollega med teknisk erfarenhet** (*Colleague with technical experience*)
- **Kollega jag litar på** (*Colleague I trust*)
- **Huvudprojektgruppen SARA** (*The main project group SARA*)
- **Delprojektgruppen/andra i pionjären** (*Subproject group/others within the pilot study*)
- **Ingen person, utan materialet och informationen som finns online** (*No person, but the materials and information online*)
- **Eget förslag** (*Own suggestions*)

- **Varför har ni rangordnat korten såhär? Hur tänkte ni? Varför tänkte ni så?** (*Why have you arranged the cards in this way? How did you think? Why did you think like this?*)

III. Diskussionsfrågor med personligt fokus (*Discussion questions with a personal focus*)

6. Vilka utmaningar ser du med att genomföra förändringar på din respektive förvaltning? (*Which challenges do you see in carrying through changes in your respective public administration unit?*)

- **På övergripande organisationsnivå?** (*On an overall organizational level?*)

7. Vilka utmaningar ser du med att genomföra förändringar för dig själv personligen? (*Which challenges do you see with carrying through changes for yourself personally?*)

8. Vad tror du behövs för din egen personliga motivation att förändra ditt arbetsätt i dokumenthantering? (*What do you think would be your personal motivation to change your way of working with document management?*)

- **Kan du ge ett exempel på det?** (*Can you give an example of that?*)

9. Vilken kommunikation anser du är rätt sätt att stödja dig personligen under din anpassningstid till det nya dokumenthanterings-systemet? (*Which communication would you say is the right way to personally support you during your time of adjustment to the new document management system?*)

- **Kan du ge ett exempel på det?** (*Can you give an example of that?*)

10. Avslutningsvis, finns det något mer som ni skulle vilja säga eller lägga till? (*Lastly, is there anything that you would like to say or add?*)

Reservfråga (*Backup question*)

Vad har ni för tidigare erfarenhet av förändringar som har genomförts på er arbetsplats? (*What is your earlier experiences of changes that has been implemented in your workplace?*)

- **Vad tyckte du var svårt eller lätt att förstå kring förändringen?** (*What did you think was difficult or easy to understand about the change?*)

Appendix D. Socio-demographic sheet

An optional socio-demographic sheet that the author handed out to the participants of the focus group interviews in order to collect the participants' personal and professional information. The sheet was handed out in Swedish, and later translated to English by the author (see in brackets).

Informationsblad (frivilligt): (*Information sheet (optional)*)

Namn: (*Name*)

Ålder: (*Age*)

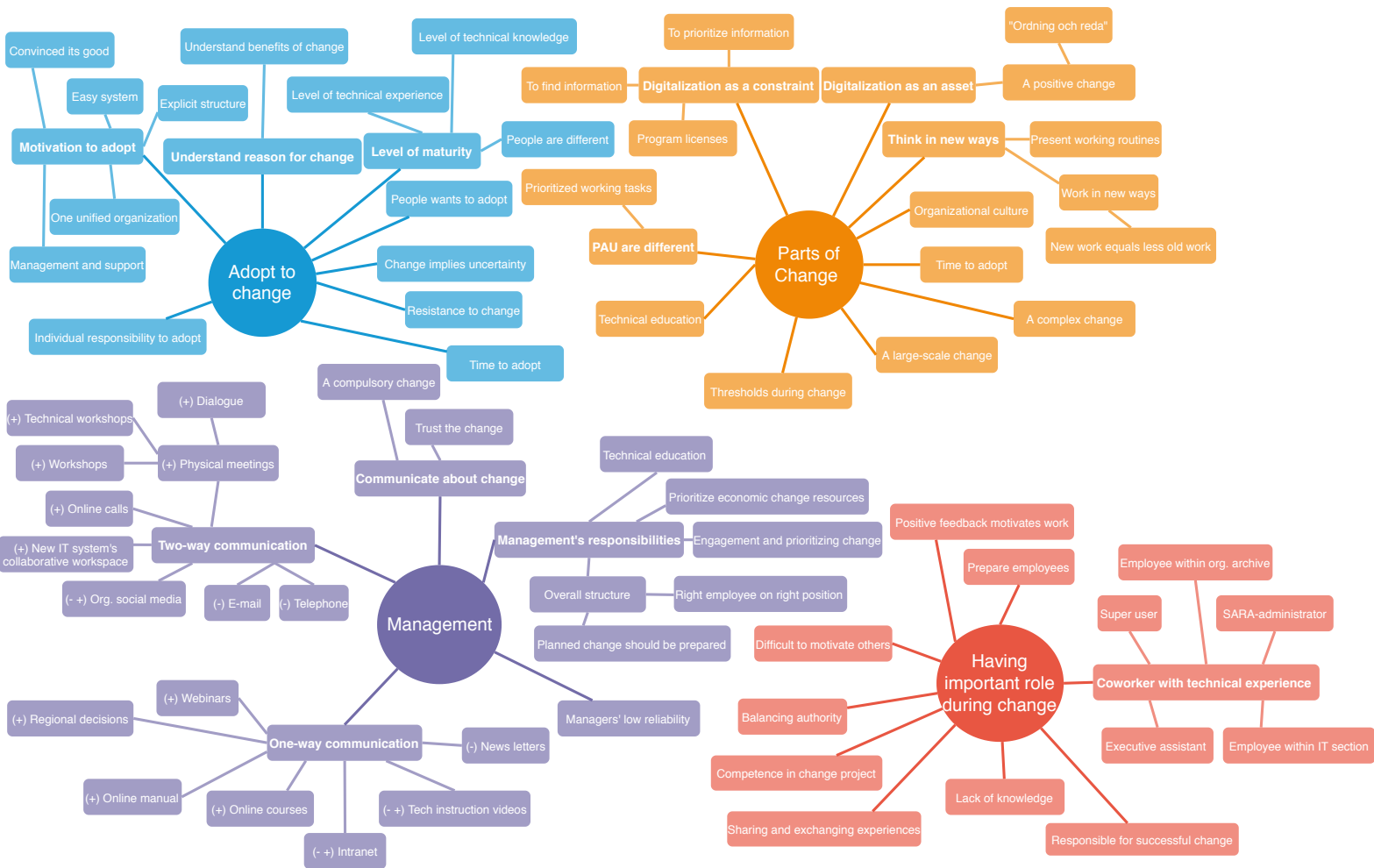
Förvaltning: (*Public Administration unit*)

Position/tjänst: (*Working position*)

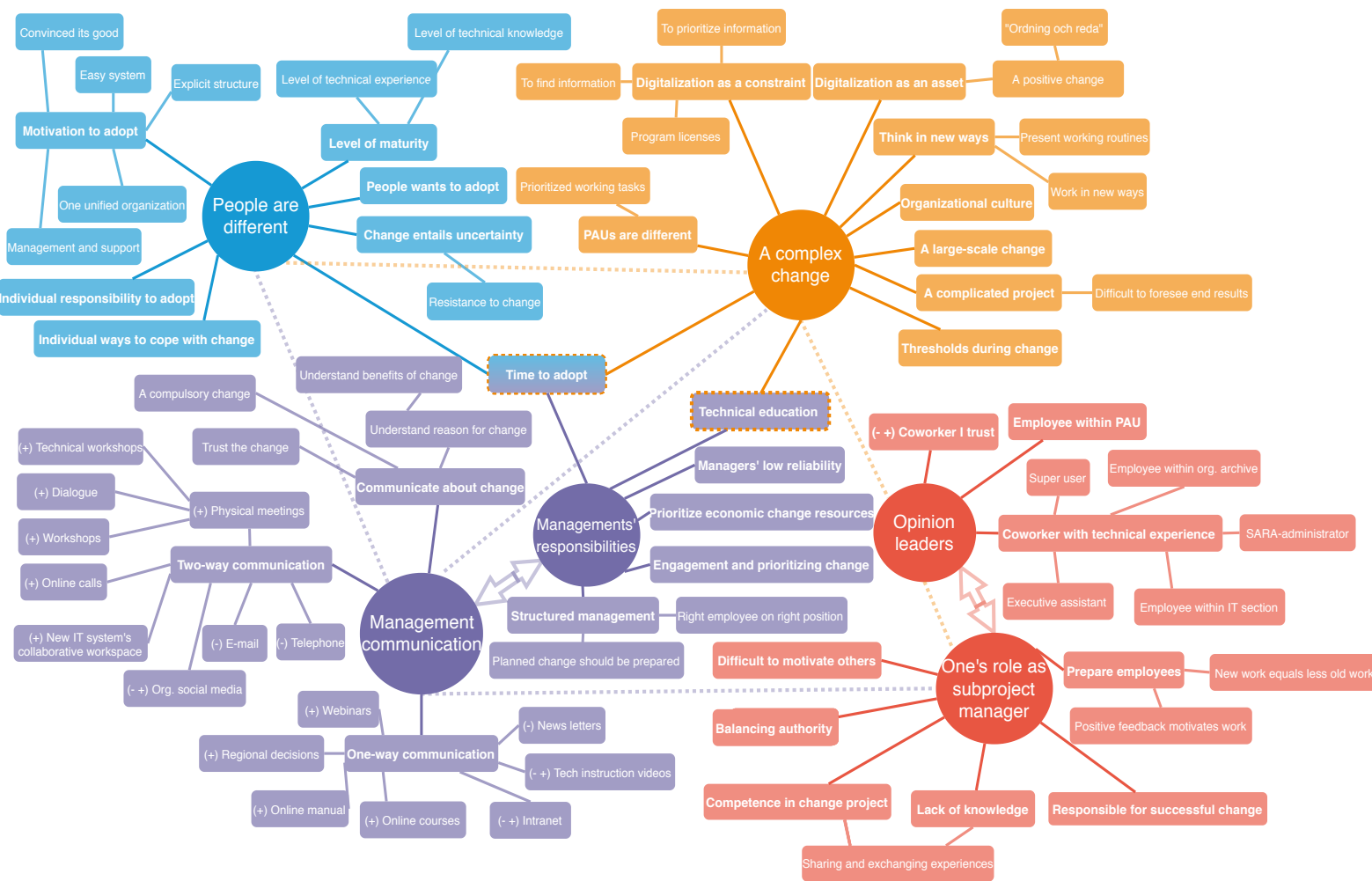
Placerad i stad: (*Town placement*)

År som anställd inom landstinget: (*Years employed in the county council*)

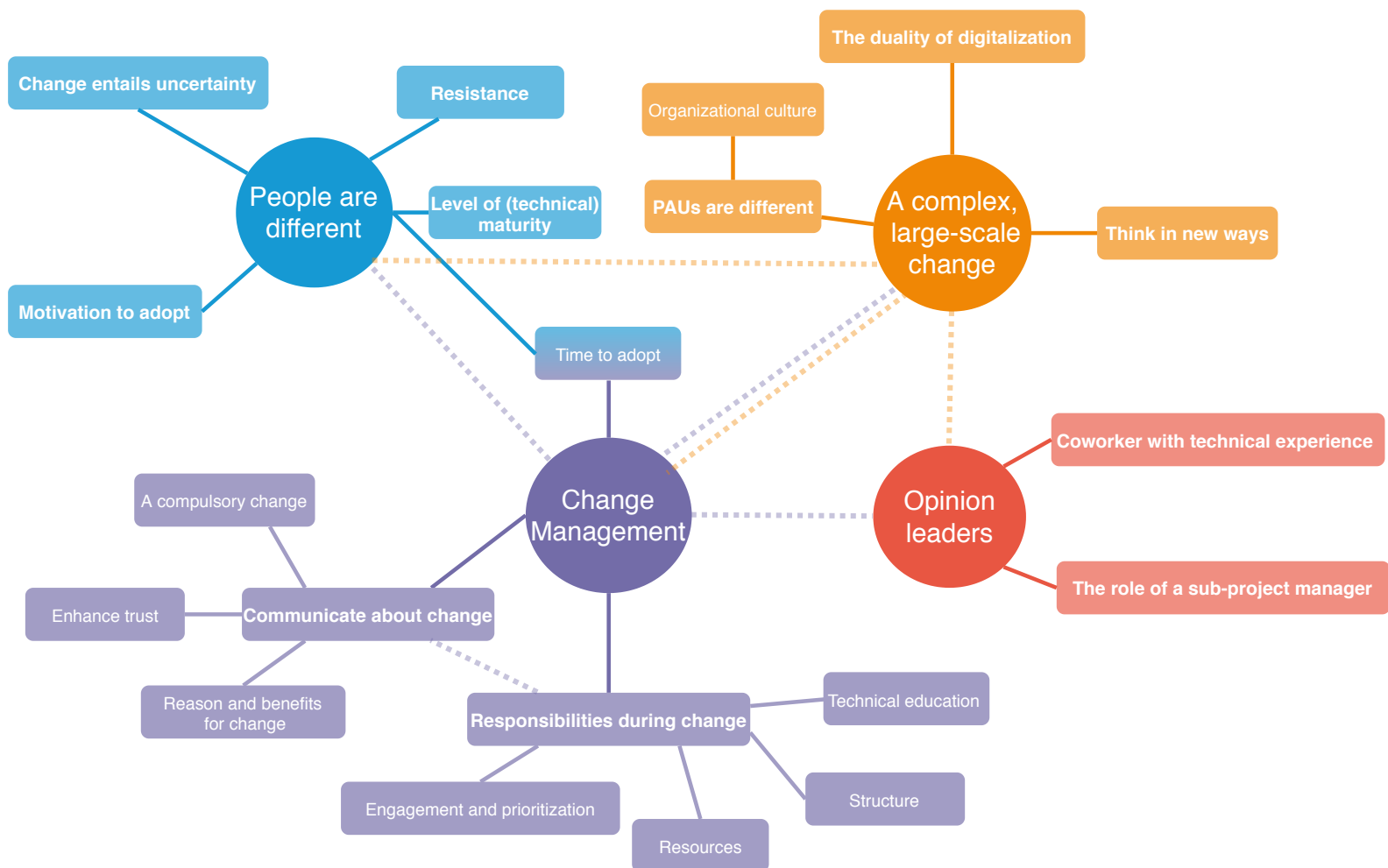
Appendix E. Thematic maps



Thematic map step 1. Initial thematic map with initial codes
Source: Own illustration, created in draw.io Diagrams



Thematic map step 2. Developed thematic map with revised and refined codes
Source: Own illustration, created in draw.io Diagrams



Thematic map step 3. Further developed thematic map with revised and refined codes (this map represents the last developed map before the final thematic map was created (final map is presented in the thesis, subchapter 6.2).

Source: Own illustration, created in draw.io Diagrams

Appendix F. Endnotes

The endnotes below are the original Swedish quotations cited in the findings and discussion chapter (Chapter 6).

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- ⁱ ”Jag tänker att det är, det är, just nu känns det som en orientering utan kompass (skratt) eller utan karta. Alltså det är så många informationskanaler [...]” (F1P2: 00:03:53.8 - 00:05:40.6)
- ⁱⁱ ”Ja jag tror alltid att möten är bättre än andra former av kommunikation.” (F3P1: 00:18:09.6-00:18:16.4)
- ⁱⁱⁱ ”Dom här mötena är guld värda. Och det är därför jag gärna vill vara här. Jag kopplar mycket mer än om jag sitter på Skype.” (F1P3: 00:47:17.3- 00:47:22.7)
- ^{iv} ”Men, jag tänker på något sätt att det vore väldigt käckt att man pratar med varandra, inte bara fysiska möten utan att man tar lärdom av varandra.” (F2P3: 00:21:38.1- 00:22:20.3)
- ^v ”Nej, det är väldigt få av våra vanliga asså, våra medarbetare som använder sig av e-mail. Alla har ju tillgång till e-mail men det är väldigt få procent som använder det.” (F1P1: 00:16:50.1 - 00:17:01.8).
- ^{vi} ”Ja, min upplevelse är att överlag att man inte jobbar i kalender och email som man borde.” (F3P2: 00:19:41.5- 00:19:53.3).
- ^{vii} Så att man ser inte det här som att det är obligatoriskt, utan okej vi måste göra det men, var i det ligger liksom att regiondirektören pekar på att "nu ska det här göras, och det måste göras, och det har prioritet"? (F2P1: 00:25:36.8- 00:26:25.2)
- ^{viii} ”Man drar igång en massa grejer och så känns det inte som att allt är riktigt färdigt. Och så får det liksom lösa sig längs vägen. Och det känns lite förhastat.” (F2P2: 00:07:18.4 - 00:07:35.0)
- ^{ix} ”Vi, min förvaltningschef har prioriterat ner detta, för det är så många saker som är mycket viktigare.” (F2P1 00:25:36.8 - 00:26:25.2)
- ^x ”Man har ett visst sätt och så ska man tänka på ett annat sätt. Så att det är klart att det sätter igång frågor och "vad är nyttan med det?" Och "hur är det?" Och "hur ska man hitta saker?"". (F1P2: 00:39:23.4 - 00:39:57.8).
- ^{xi} ”Spontant skulle jag vilja säga att det känns som att man tar ett steg in i den moderna tiden. För hemma är ju allting digitaliserat i stort sett. Och så kommer man till jobbet och går tillbaka till 1800-talet. Det känns inte helt bra. Så jag tycker det är jätteroligt, och på tiden.” (F3P1: 00:01:30.0 - 00:01:51.5).
- ^{xii} ”Nu får vi åtminstone ordning och reda, som kanske om fem tio år så ser vi effekten av detta.” (F1P1: 00:08:13.6 - 00:08:49.7).
- ^{xiii} ”Men jag tänker också systemen kanske ibland begränsar, det blir väldigt mycket fokus på system och sånt ibland att det begränsar kreativitet och lokala lösningar.” (F2P2: 00:04:45.2 - 00:05:18.6)
- ^{xiv} ”Sen så tar man ju till sig det på olika sätt, och det är olika viktigt för olika personer.” (F3P1: 00.06.28.3-00.07.37.0).
- ^{xv} ”Sen att man, som enskild medarbetare ska lyckas förstå och använda sig av det, det tror jag många upplever en "kommer jag verkligen klara det" liksom, en osäkerhet inför det. Och sen så är man ju väldigt trött på nya system.” (F3P2: 00:46:29.2 - 00:47:02.0).
- ^{xvi} ”Men, men nej så att just det där, vad skulle jag säga, att alltså det finns ju liksom ett latent motstånd tänker jag.” (F1P2: 00.13.00.8-00.13.31.0).
- ^{xvii} ”Övergången till det här nya nu då, det blir samma sak, att dom som kan väldigt lite idag kommer ju ha svårare för att komma in i det. Och dom som jobbar mycket med det kanske har mycket lättare då.” (F3P2: 00:08:51.6 - 00:09:55.6).
- ^{xviii} ”Men någonstans så känns det viktigt att man förstår att det här är mitt ansvar också, oavsett om jag kan vända mig till [namn] som stödperson så, så ligger ändå ansvaret på mig och det ligger lite i det här med beslut och...och det.” (F2P3: 00:24:32.0 - 00:25:07.1).
- ^{xix} ”Och sen blir det ordning och reda och alla vet och alla jobbar samma, utifrån samma förutsättningar.” (F1P1: 00.46.23.7-00.46.29.0).

^{xx} ”Jag tror att det ska va någon som förstår vad dokumenthantering är och som jobbar mycket med det.” (F3P1: 00:31:15.5 - 00:31:16.5)

^{xxi} ”[...] att vara negativ själv eller ha någon slags "äh jag vet inte" asså det ger ringar på vattnet.” (F3P2: 00:55:49.0 - 00:56:30.4).

^{xxii} ”Aa, för nu är jag lika ny själv i det här, och hur ska jag då framföra sånt?” (F1P1: 00.08.54.0-00.08.59.5).

^{xxiii} ”Men sen också att nå ner med informationen till den som faktiskt ska göra det, det ser jag som en ganska stor såhär utmaning [...]” (F2P3: 00:47:52.4 - 00:48:19.0).

^{xxiv} ”[...] man känner sig ansvarig för att det blir bra liksom verkligen. Även om man kanske inte riktigt har haft jättestora förutsättningar att påverka utfallet egentligen.” (F2P2: 00:51:41.9 - 00:52:02.7)